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COVER: David Philippaerts absolutely worked his nuts off in 2008 and became world champion for the first time in his career making all the effort well worthwhile
© *Sutty*

CONTENTS: Two-time world champion Steve Ramon is one of the most stylish and technically gifted riders you'll ever see on a motocross bike as this whip under darkening skies in Bulgaria perfectly proves
© *Ray Archer*

COMMENT

It's large portions of doom and gloom all round at the moment isn't it? My house is worth £10K less than when I bought it 18 months ago, my mortgage repayments are going in the other direction and there are so many warning lights flashing on my car's dash just turning the key in the ignition is like firing up a mobile disco. But despite fears of a looming global recession – and it's well and truly rolled up at my house – the off-road industry seems to be standing firm as evidenced by last month's Dirt Bike Show at Stoneleigh Park.

A whopping 18,000 dirt bike fans made it to the Midlands for the show – okay, so it was down a few thou on last year's figures but even so that's a bloody healthy turn-out. As always there was a shedload going on with plenty to keep show goers occupied and we were treated to an annual helping of duelling mics as Nik Fisk and Chris Sprawson went head-to-head with Nik stalking the DBR Live Stage as Chris' ghostly voice crackled out from the tannoy.

For me one of the most interesting stands in the show was tucked away near the Trials Village. The Quantya electric bike may have only had a small presence at Stoneleigh but the machine itself – or maybe just the concept of it – could have a big, big impact in the future. Zero emissions, zero noise – an electric dirt bike would solve all the major problems facing off-road sport literally at the flick of a switch. If, that is, it's actually any good.

Anyway, so intrigued were we that we sorted out a test for the following week at FatCat Motoparc near Doncaster where Tony Marshall put it through its paces. The day didn't go entirely smoothly and, as it is, the Quantya needs development time to turn it from a curiosity into a genuinely competitive off-road machine but all the signs indicate that they're heading in the right direction. Think about it, you could have tracks built in city centres and no-one would complain about the noise – well, apart from the sound of a track full of riders swearing at each other and a sea of generators charging batteries between races!

Finally, just time to say a huge congrats to DBR's #1 pin-up girl Tiffany Leigh who gave birth to daughter Magenta-Mae Princess on November 27 – good work Tiff! Everyone here sends their love...

Sean



Spectators at The Tough One get to watch Walker – that alone is worth the price of admission...

NEWSHOUND!

DEPUTY DAWG'S DIRTY DELIVERY OF OFF-ROAD NEWS...

Rumours running around internet forums regarding the future career of Tyla Rattray were finally put to rest by KTM's race director Pit Beirer moments before this issue of DBR hit the printers. Pit confirmed that the freshly crowned MX2 world champion will be parting company with the Austrian manufacturer although he did make it clear that "KTM have not released him from his contract yet".

Although it's yet to be confirmed where Styla is headed it's thought that the 23-year-old will be joining Mitch Payton's Pro Circuit Kawasaki team in the US of A. Tyla's aspirations of racing in America are nothing new and he even went as far as stating as much early in 2008. "My plan is to go to America next year [2009] if I get the right deal regardless of if I win the world championship or not," said Tyla pre-season. "I feel I'm ready to go because I've had a good time in Europe but I've been here for eight years now and it'll be good for me to have a change."

With the 2009 MX1 championship chase being so stacked with talent – there are at least six genuine title contenders – it's unlikely that Tyla will be missed too much although KTM must be spewing that the South African star wants to break his contract with the company who helped him secure his first and so far only major title. Keep a close eye on www.dirtbikerider.com for developments on this story as they happen!

Aside from making a resolution to stop crashing, womanising and playing Guitar Hero what other plans do you have for the New Year? Well whatever they are I can pretty much guarantee that they won't be quite as exciting as what Aussie

madman Robbie Maddison has in mind. After jumping a massively long 322 feet 7.5 inches – or 592 average length penises – last New Year the 27-year-old plans to reach an all-new high in Las Vegas this winter.

The plan is that Robbie will jump his Yamaha YZ250 around 120 feet – this time vertically – so he can successfully land on top of a 96 foot high exact replica of the Arc de Triomphe that's handily situated right in front of the Paris Las Vegas hotel and casino complex on the Strip. Then, because Robbie's a good boy and follows the laws of physics and that, he's gonna jump back down from atop the arch to a landing ramp that's situated some 50 feet directly below – freefalltastic!

The biggest off-road event of note in the UK of late was the Dirt Bike Show that successfully went off at Stoneleigh Park in t'Midlands. Show promoters Promoto claim that 18,000 paying visitors entered the exhibition over its run of four days which proves that despite the credit crunch interest in off-road motorcycle sport is as strong as ever.

As well as top celebs like Charley Boorman and Geoff Walker I also bumped into smokin' fast blonde-bombshell Sophia Paull who was wandering the halls looking for a deal. It strikes me as being strange that Britain's highest placed finisher in the 2008 women's world championship is struggling to put together a package for '09. Sophia finished 24th in the final series standings in '08 as a total privateer riding a bone stock bike and she's mega marketable too – check out her modelling images online – so if any savvy squad leaders fancy hooking Sophia up with a dirt scooter and a lift to the '09 GPs give us a yell here at the DBR office and

David Campbell snaps up the MX1 crown at the final round of the championship



Carl Benjamin fights through the mud



New MX2 champ Phil Mercer dominates all season



Matt Porter leads the MX2 pack at Norley

GOLDENOLDIES!

CAMPBELL AND MERCER LIFT AMCA TITLES AS AGE AND EXPERIENCE TRIUMPH OVER YOUTHFUL EXUBERANCE...

Words and photos by Mike Wood

Scoring a victory for experience over youthful exuberance, at the age of 30-something both David Campbell and Phil Mercer – two riders who have both competed in top level British championship MX – took home the 2008 AMCA championship titles. While Mercer produced an immaculate, consistent season to lead the MX2 chase from start to finish, Campbell was involved in an absolute rollercoaster of a MX1 battle which once again was only decided at the final round.

Earlier in the season another over 30 – 11-time AMCA champ Gary Davies – had made a racing comeback and was in serious contention until a crash at round four at Walterstone resulted in a shoulder injury which kept him out for the remainder of the campaign. And at the opposite end of the age scale young Clinton Barrs was also a serious MX1 title contender and was just 19 points off the lead after round four before his championship dreams were shattered by a serious leg injury.

Just like in 2007, Ben Saunders was the leader of the MX1 class going into the final round but a terrible trio of mechanical DNFs dropped him from first spot down to fourth. As well as being snapped

up by Campbell he was also overhauled by triple AMCA MX2 champ Brad O'Leary – enjoying a very impressive rookie MX1 season – and former top youth rider Charlie Hollis.

The season started and finished in atrociously wet conditions but Campbell was the king in the mud, taking the overall wins at both Cleobury Mortimer and Little Bowden. DC was even rumoured to have been seen performing a rain dance before the final round at Little Bowden and boy were his prayers answered as the big man upstairs produced an absolute deluge!

When asked was he surprised at the margin of his victories, DC revealed his mud-mastering technique. "I was shocked by my winning margins but in those conditions I was totally focussed ensuring I did not slip off. I hardly looked at Mark my mechanic and just kept going until I saw the chequered flag. You have to ride the bike in high gears using the torque of the engine as much as possible to stop wheelspin."

Down in MX2, Phil Mercer opened with a double win at Cleobury – a performance he later labelled as his best of the season. From here onwards Phil

finished on the podium in all the remaining six rounds with his lowest moto placing being sixth in the second race at Norley.

After just missing out on the title during 2007, Mercer was clear on the reasons for his 2008 dominance. "The preparation of my bike was equal to GP standard thanks to Luke Brown my mechanic and Mel at MTR who has to be the best engine tuner I've ever known! With the championship season starting so late it's hard work getting yourself motivated mid-May to continue training and developing the bikes when you started work way back in January. So I owe a big thank you to my girlfriend Dawn because it was her pushing me out the door and onto my mountain bike."

While Mercer produced outstanding consistency, both his main rivals in 2008 – Lee Dunham and Lee Payne – were also in great form. During four consecutive rounds at Conover, Bevercotes, Branston and Culham the eventual MX2 title top three filled the podium placings. The only rider to really threaten the leading trio was Matt Porter who took third spot at Cleobury and Norley before winning the muddy final encounter at Little Bowden.

David Campbell snaps up the MX1 crown at the final round of the championship



Carl Benjamin fights through the mud



New MX2 champ Phil Mercer dominates all season



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FINAL SERIES STANDINGS

MX1 >>>

1	David Campbell (Honda)	401 points
2	Brad O'Leary (Direct CCTVIAMS KTM)	366
3	Charlie Hollis (Mission Control Honda)	332
4	Ben Saunders (Delkevic Kawasaki)	329
5	Rick Du-Feu (Delkevic Kawasaki)	290
6	Clinton Barrs (Fowlers KTM)	259
7	Aaron Crowder (Sandiford Honda)	223
8	Danny Blakeley (Silvesters Yamaha)	194
9	Richard Meakin (Honda)	190
10	James Russell (Corby Kawasaki)	189

MX2 >>>

1	Phil Mercer (Delkevic Kawasaki)	454 points
2	Lee Dunham (MotoXtreme Kawasaki)	395
3	Lee Payne (Rocket Centre Yamaha)	388
4	Matt Porter (Select Homes Honda)	315
5	Sean Frayne (Honda)	244
6	Simon Lane (Sutton MX Honda)	235
7	James Lane (Sutton MX Honda)	222
8	Owen Delaney (T+W Racing Yamaha)	212
9	Jamie Dobson (MTR Honda)	186
10	Jack Taylor (T+W Racing KTM)	185



GORDON CROCKARD

LIFE IS FOR LIVING!

IT'S NOT BEEN ALL FUN AND GAMES FOR GC RECENTLY BUT HE'S STILL LOOKING ON THE BRIGHT SIDE AND STAYING POSITIVE...

Words by Gordon Crockard Photo by Suttty

'Holy smoke,' thinks me, 'what the feck am I going to write this time.' I don't even know who might even care what I write anyway so why should I worry too much? This time of year all I see in other guys' columns is Party Party Party and it's all a little predictable and boring. Then after Christmas all you'll read is Train Train Train.

So what am I going to write that is any different you may ask? Well, yes, I have been partying but if you know me at all you will be wise to know that I do that all year round anyway. I'm a real person who is here to enjoy the rollercoaster ride of life. And if I have an appetite to go out and let off some steam then that is exactly what I will do regardless of what month of the year it is. I have always been that way, even during my glory days as a GP winner and a three-time British champion I lived my life as I do now. To enjoy it!

I know how people would frown on this idea and criticize my actions saying I've wasted opportunities that they would give anything for. Well, I'm not bothered what anyone thinks about it because they haven't got a clue about how it works. The image that GP motocross projects compared to how it actually is in the real world is vastly different. I have often considered sharing my stories but feared the regular MX fan wouldn't believe any of it. I'll say no more – well, for now at least...

I did a German SX at the weekend for the Waldman Honda team. It was in Chemnitz in the east of the country and absolutely freezing. I flew to Prague and drove up from there through three feet of snow in the rent-a-Skoda. It was two nights racing so tight going seeing as I haven't been near a bike since Sheffield which was over a month ago. I got bottle-necked into going at the last minute so that's why I was so unprepared and out of shape. I have totally been off any training and my system was not ready for intense supercross sprints but I was there to stay in the loop with the German teams and do as best I could considering my condition. I didn't get to race the 2009 CRF450 but some of the other teams were racing them and actually an '09 CRF took the win on the second night. I liked the look of how the '09 was working and I do look forward to getting out on one next year.

My next race is just after Christmas in Germany again and the team will be using '09s then so I guess that will be a good opportunity to get to find out the story with the all-new model. Plus I will have time to be in better shape for the race. Heath Voss was my team-mate in Germany and he won the overall ahead of Mike Brown and Eric Sorby. I sucked and wasn't even close to them. But I have the Dortmund race after Christmas to have a crack at them.

I had a little bit of trials action recently with a bunch of Tarmac men. They are ridiculously competitive and

are lucky that crashing at trials isn't too dangerous. If the same bunch were to go out on MX bikes they can forget about being uninjured for racing. Without naming and shaming these top rank guys I will have to tell you that they are the real deal world runners and BSB winners who should honestly be taking a little more care of themselves when out having a bit of winter trials fun. It's the competitiveness that makes them so brave and willing. Absolutely no way can they be outdone by their buddies. Fair play for having so much pride I say and it sure is entertaining to be out with them watching the smashing and crashing. Thankfully I have had a good number of years riding trials and luckily can ride at a higher level so I don't get caught up in the 'I'm the best' contest.

The speedy Tarmac men were over on Northern Irish soil not just to mess around on trials bikes but to actually attend a charity sporting dinner. I was there too and the craic was mighty as always. Even got to drink beer with Charley Boorman. He did the Long Way Round and Long Way Down expeditions with Ewan McGregor on the big twin BMWs.

I attended the Dirt Bike Show in Stoneleigh and I had my fun in the evenings and did a little business in the daytime at the show. I enjoyed hanging out and chatting with some people I haven't seen in years. Also meeting some new contacts which could lead to happier times ahead. So all in all a worthwhile journey. I hadn't been in a few years so it was all quite interesting again after missing it for a while and I have a contract for 2010 to ride for the Purple Helmets if I want. I was also doing much needed practice starts with Dave Watson of RaceSpec in the nightclub on Saturday night – Linford Christie 100 metre starting blocks style – and I won four out of four! After that I showed off some of my disco aerobics which raised a few eyebrows that night too. Actually thinking about it all again is quite funny and I could go on with more but I won't. I am a professional after all.

In general things in my life right now are going through a bad period but it will change and I am very determined to get through my personal troubles with an immense drive to be successful at all challenges I take on. I will contest all British races in 2009 and I am in no mood to add any more negativity on top of the things that have already happened to me recently. The things that have happened to me in my life of late have been controlled by others and their actions have caused me pain. The races I enter in '09 will be my chance to create something good. I will be in control of where I finish and where I finish will affect how happy a person I'll be. You all know the guy who wins is a happy guy. So do the math...

Handwritten signature
dirtbikerider 13



Danny Blakeley ends the year eighth in MX1



Simon Lane takes sixth overall in MX2



BEACHBOYS!

STEVE RAMON DELIVERS A KILLER BLOW TO THE
COMPETITION IN HOLLAND'S PREMIER BEACH
BLAST – THE RED BULL KNOCK OUT

Silky smooth Suzuki star Steve Ramon picked up a well-deserved win at the Red Bull Knock Out beach race as many of his closest competitors were forced to chuck in the towel due to machinery failure and physical fatigue. The two-time world champion – who was bizarrely running the number 72 made famous by Belgian compatriot Stefan Everts – finished just ahead of sand specialists Arnaud Demeester and Johan Boonen in the main event. Manxman David Knight and Dutchman Marc De Reuver both traded the lead in the early running but were forced to retire when their tortured machines cried enough in the power-sapping soft sand.

Other top riders entered included Flemish Lion Joel Smets, speed queens Tarah Geiger and Marianne Veenstra and British trials legend Dougie Lampkin who finished a disappointing 170th in the final after qualifying 25th in the preliminary round. Two other British riders made it to the final race with Justin Carter being the highest placed UK rider in 150th with Matthew Pope finishing just four places behind!

*For you the race is over!
Broek Van Door Handle and
Hertz Van Hire get a lift
back to the pits...*



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STEPHEN SWORD

LUCKY NUMBER 7!

SWORDY KEEPS HIS RACING NUMBER FOR NEXT YEAR BUT WITH A NEW TEAM, A NEW HOUSE AND A NEW BABY ON THE WAY IT'S JUST ABOUT THE ONLY THING THAT'S STAYING CONSTANT...

Words by Stephen Sword Photo by Sully

Well another month has flown by and it's been crazy trying to get so much done. I have moved house yet again and this is definitely the house for the foreseeable future. The reason for the move is to be closer to Jodie's family when the baby comes. It's also good for me as it's closer to where I train and ride plus I am back with a lot of my friends.

I ended up getting people in to do our move as I was training loads and Jodie because of all the complications is not allowed to do anything. It took away the stress of moving so was well worth it. So after all the worry it could not have gone smoother – how lucky were we as people say it is one of the most stressful things you can do!

I went to the Dirt Bike Show and it was great to see everyone again, plus all the fans were really nice and they all seemed pleased I was moving to KTM. It was strange going to the KTM stand as for so many years I have been on the Kawasaki one. I'm looking forward to the change and have always done well in the past on a KTM. I could only go to the show on the Saturday because we moved house on the Friday – I would have preferred to spend more time there but I will next year. Once again it was a great turn-out and I know us riders really appreciate it.

This month has been a really a hard month for training. I train in a group with my trainer Monday, Wednesday and Friday which is tough and we're pushed so hard that you feel like your body is going to just shut down through exhaustion. Then on Tuesday and Thursday I swim, cycle and gym alone so every weekday is hard. I enjoy it as each week you realise you can push more and I can see the results. Working on my fitness before riding is so important as it gives me the foundations I need to be able to ride at the GPs and feel just as strong in the second moto as I did in the first. Also, as you all probably know, if you get on the bike too early you are likely to burn yourself out mid-season which is a rider's worst nightmare.

I'm picking up my practice bike this week so am really looking forward to going out on it. We're going to do a bit of riding before

Christmas – nothing silly, just light riding and getting used to the bike ready for when I go testing. I will be testing next year with Harry Everts so I am sure I will do loads of sand riding which is what after last year I do need to work on. If I can get confident in sand I'm sure I can do well and be consistent for next year's title. Who better to help then Harry? He is so passionate about training riders – I believe that his attitude will help me mentally in so many ways. I have also found out I am able to keep the #7 next year so keep your eyes peeled for me.

I have been to a few presentations this year already and I really want to thank the clubs for inviting me. The faces of the kids when they receive their awards from me makes me realise how fantastic MX is and the ability Britain has to produce such good riders for the future. Their determination and the sacrifices their parents make show that the sport does deserve so much more status then it receives at present – maybe in the future this will change.

Changing the subject, with Christmas just around the corner and Jodie's birthday coming up it is going to be one expensive month. We are staying at home this year which will be a really nice change. My turn to get the apron on and put my chef skills to the test – I wonder if anyone will notice M&S ready meals! It is the last Christmas for Jodie and I before the mini Swordy arrives and causes havoc for us both and I am really excited about his/her arrival.

I'm taking Jodie to the theatre and then on for some food – we will be staying overnight so I'm sure she will find time to shop. We have not done any Christmas shopping yet so hopefully we will break the back of it and get most of it done, stopping for a bit of mulled wine on the way as well.

That's it for another month so have a great Christmas and a happy New Year and enjoy the stress of putting the lights on the Christmas tree after first unknitting them! Also, enjoy spending time with family and friends plus loads of mulled wine and Christmas TV. Have a great one!

Braaaaaaap #7

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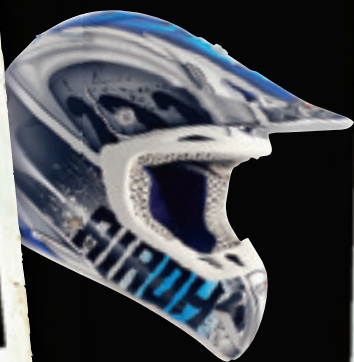


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T H E R A C E SECRETARY

WE CATCH UP WITH THE MAN WHO KEEPS RACE DAY AT HAWKSTONE RUNNING LIKE CLOCKWORK...

Words and photo by JP O'Connell

We kind of take it for granted when we fancy a ride at the weekend – check out the regs, send off your entry and roll up on the day. Simple isn't it? But what about the behind-the-scenes heroes working away to make sure our Sunday in the saddle goes as smoothly as possible? One such man is Salop MC's Gary Ford...

DBR: Introduce yourself and tell us what you do.

GF: "I'm Gary Ford, race secretary for Salop Motor Club who run Hawkstone motocross circuit."

DBR: What does your job involve?

GF: "It entails doing all of the entries for the riders, receiving them all through the post and then issuing acceptances and race numbers. At the actual event I will take care of the signing on and all of the secretarial side of things."

DBR: How long have you been doing this job?

GF: "I've been involved with the club for over 20 years now and took over this post in the mid '90s."

DBR: With Hawkstone being one of the most famous circuits in the world why do you no longer host a GP?

GF: "Looking at it now it's not only the cost but this venue just isn't big enough any more. The track would be fine but it's the infrastructure, the parking and so on – it's just not big enough. The GPs are now running out of road race circuits where everything is already in place and that's something we just couldn't afford to do."

DBR: Do you think we will ever see a GP here again?

GF: "Definitely not...well, saying that, not an MX1 or MX2 – let's put it that way [Hawkstone is lined up for an MX3 GP on April 12 – SLJ]"

DBR: The pre-season international has been running for about 10 years – how did that come about?

GF: "Once we'd finished with the GPs it was a case of what do we do now? We ran a New Year's Day meeting but as the sport got more professional it got harder and harder to get decent riders to come as they just didn't want to do it. The next best thing was to have an early season race so that's what we did. It's good for the riders because they are in full race mode by then and can use it to gauge themselves and work on set-up."

DBR: How many events do you run a year at Hawkstone?

GF: "There's about 14 events run a year, not all run by Salop Motor Club though. People rent the circuit out. Salop run about four or five a year."

DBR: Which has been the best day's racing you have seen at this track?

GF: "I don't know about the best day, it's just about seeing the best riders on here. I've seen Stefan on here, Pichon, Smets and whatever. To see them on a hard circuit riding so fast – that's what stands out for me rather than a single day. I get a big buzz from knowing that the best in the world are coming to ride on here."

DBR: How long does it take to get the venue prepared for an event like the international or British championship?

GF: "For myself, actually contracting riders, I'll start that in November for the international in March. As for the track, well after the last event of this year the circuit will be totally graded and then left to settle, then a little bit of work will be done in January and February just to spruce it up ready for March."

DBR: How many people work for the club?

GF: "There are 16 people on the committee – nobody is paid, it's all voluntary."

DBR: How many tickets need to be sold for the club to break even?

GF: "I'd say for a round of the British it would need to be between 1,500 and 2,000 and for the international it would want to be a minimum of 3,000."

DBR: When the circuit isn't holding an event is it ever used as a practice track?

GF: "No, never. We are limited to 14 days a year and we use all of those for racing. We have a good relationship with our neighbours and wouldn't want to spoil it."

DBR: What's been the biggest turn out of fans that you've ever seen here?

GF: "That was probably '85 and '86 when Thorpe was winning his championships racing people like Geboers, Malherbe and Jobe. We had crowds in excess of 20,000 here."

DBR: In this age of health and safety craziness what sort of insurance cover do you need to have in place?

GF: "The riders are covered by the ACU and we have Public Liability but to be honest I don't know too much about it!"

DBR: Who works on the track for you and are there any changes in the pipeline?

GF: "We have a driver who comes in and does all the digger work for us and about five people from the club come down in their own time and do everything else that needs doing. As for changes there's nothing planned at the moment."

DBR: Hawkstone's infamous double jump was the setting for Nick Haskell's iconic photo of Jobe jumping over the head of Malherbe during the 1984 GP. Why did it have to go?

GF: "It was unfortunate but new regulations were brought in, maybe due to that picture! Although it was brilliant it was also quite deep – the riders didn't do it to start with, then some Americans came to a GP and they were doubling it which got everyone else thinking that they ought to be doing it. As the picture shows not all of the GP riders were doing it – Malherbe was riding through it while Jobe was jumping it every lap."



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KRT

TEAM

AS THEY WERE ABOUT TO LEAVE FOR THEIR NEW TEAMS AT THE END OF THE '08 SEASON, WE CAUGHT UP WITH KRT'S TANEL LEOK AND MANUEL PRIEM TO FIND OUT ABOUT FILMS, FILTERS AND FRENCH FRIES...

Words by JP O'Connell Photo by rayarcher.com

Before the season wrapped up and Tanel Leok and Manuel Priem packed their bags to head off to pastures new we caught up with the Kawasaki duo to talk about trouser snakes and rollercoaster phobias...

DBR: Who would play you in a film of your life?

TL: "I think Robert De Niro."

MP: "I don't watch so much TV so for me that's a difficult question – maybe Vin Diesel?"

DBR: When did you last clean an air filter?

TL: "Clean? I don't know, maybe 2001? As for change then I've done that this year."

MP: "That was the last year that I was a privateer riding the European championships so back in 2000."

DBR: Could you check your own valve clearances?

TL: "Yeah, I think I could do that."

MP: "Not any more. I used to be able to work on my 250 two-stroke but not now it's all four-stroke."

DBR: Have you ever eaten anything you've killed?

TL: "Yes, fish."

MP: "Not that I can think of."

DBR: How many bones have you broken?

TL: "I have broken my shoulder and shoulderblade but I've also had operations on my knee ligaments and a kidney."

MP: "My right collarbone twice, my left once, my wrist and my feet."

DBR: How many and where are your tattoos?

TL: "I have a tattoo of a tree stump in the middle of my back."

MP: "I have a tribal design on my back."

DBR: It's the last lap, you're in second and right on the leader's rear wheel – do you take him out in the last corner for the win?

TL: "I don't want to take him out but if I find the right line then I don't mind giving him a bit of a bump if I'm going for the win!"

MP: "If it's possible and not too dirty then I would try it but not to take them out."

DBR: What car do you drive?

TL: "Mercedes Vito van."

MP: "For the moment a Mini Cooper S."

DBR: If money was no object what car would you drive?

TL: "There are many but I think first on my shopping list would be the Bentley Turbo."

MP: "An Aston Martin."

DBR: What is your favourite food?

TL: "I like simple home-cooked food."

MP: "Belgian French fries with beef."



DBR: If you weren't a motocrosser what would you be?

TL: "If I weren't a motocross rider I would like to be a wealthy businessman!"

MP: "I think building houses because my dad has a company that builds houses and I was doing that before I started riding professionally."

DBR: Which is your favourite motocross track?

TL: "Heinola in Finland."

MP: "Isle of Wight."

DBR: What's your ideal holiday?

TL: "I like an active holiday with some extreme stuff like wake boarding, snow boarding, mountain biking – I like to push myself and have fun!"

MP: "I like it to be hot – like 30-32 degrees, nice beach, very clear water and just time to relax and have a little bit of fun."

DBR: Have you ever been arrested and why?

TL: "No, never."

MP: "No."

DBR: What's the most embarrassing thing you've done while drunk?

TL: "I don't remember, I was drunk! There was once at my friend's house I did some cooking while drunk and I decided to do it with a pan on my head – unbeknown to me my friend's mum had walked in to the kitchen and was stood behind me!"

MP: "I don't really drink very much and when I do drink I get very happy, not aggressive."

DBR: What is your favourite band?

TL: "Slipknot I think."

MP: "I listen to lots of different stuff but at the moment I have been listening to Europe!"

DBR: What's your best pick-up line?

TL: "[Laughing] I'm a wealthy businessman and I have a huge BMW outside!"

MP: "[Laughing] After 13 years with my wife I can no longer remember!"

DBR: How many sit-ups can you do?

TL: "When I was a bit younger in '02 I managed over 200 in one go."

MP: "Quite a lot I think, maybe 100."

DBR: How long would you have to be seeing someone before you cut the cheese in her presence?

TL: "Hopefully it would be quite a while – but sometimes it just happens."

Mrs Priem is sat at the table so we skip this question to Manuel!

DBR: What's your favourite film?

TL: "Pulp Fiction."

MP: "Probably XXX."

DBR: Do you have any fears or phobias?

TL: "I can't be sure but maybe if I saw a lion in front of me!"

MP: "If I get on a fairground ride and it doesn't start immediately then I start thinking 'oh sh*t what if the wheel falls off?' or something like that..."

DBR: What's the most embarrassing article of clothing you've owned/own?

TL: "Definitely a pink and black Lycra cycling suit!"

MP: "I don't feel comfortable dressing up smart so if we have to go to a party I may buy something and then never wear it again."

DBR: Can you cook and if so what's your signature dish?

TL: "Yes, I like to cook home-made schnitzel, mash potatoes and vegetables."

MP: "I can cook but only if my wife prepares everything for me first!"

DBR: What's your most prized possession?

TL: "My son Sebastien."

MP: "Our house I think."

DBR: Favourite race you've been in?

TL: "That was in Spain in 2006."

MP: "This year in Loket was very nice, the second moto there were seven or eight guys just like passing, passing, passing."

DBR: Have you ever been in a fight and if so did you win?

TL: "Yes and yes."

MP: "Ummm, yes, two or three times. A friend of mine was being hit by these two guys so I went and helped out. We won but I am not a fighter, I prefer to have fun."

DBR: How fast can you down a pint?

TL: "I don't really like beer!"

MP: "I'm not sure."

DBR: Is winning a race better than sex?

TL: "Sometimes, yes – it depends on how the motos go."

MP: "[Laughing] I think that winning a GP is very nice but then having sex is also nice!"

DBR: Who is your sporting hero?

TL: "In motocross it was JMB, outside of motocross it's Matti Nykanen the Finnish ski jumper, he has won four Olympic golds and seven world championships."

MP: "I don't really have one."

DBR: Tell us something about yourself that no-one else knows?

TL: "I have a really big anaconda – in my trousers!"

MP: "I worked full time as a builder until I was 20 years old."

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Edward Allingham will race for Steve Dixon in '09 as he makes the move to the adult ranks

FORWARD THINKING!

WITH 2008 JUST ABOUT DONE AND DUSTED NOW'S THE TIME TO FOCUS ON THE YEAR AHEAD...

Words by Stevie Mills Photo by Sutty

Happy Christmas and seasonal greetings to you all from DBR's Irish HQ. May 2009 shine on your hopes and dreams, keeping you and your loved ones safe as we embrace the excitement and challenges of the New Year together.

At this time of the year we reflect on the past 12 months while keeping positive focus on how things will improve over the coming year. I believe that you get out of life what you invest into it and hard graft and integrity will always come to the fore in the long term.

The name O'Meara is fast becoming a household name within Irish MX circles and indeed further afield under the guidance of Jonny McRoberts whose focus is to help young local motocross talent. All three O'Meara boys won Irish and Ulster championships this season in their respective classes with Calium (9), John (14) and Jason (11) riding under the Team Rock Star/Snap On Tools banner with the help of a loyal band of local sponsors. Jason created quite a stir in the BYMX by finishing third overall in the 65cc class in his first season racing at national level.

Success breeds success and Jonny has teamed up with TAS Racing for '09. This should help take the boys to the next level as Philip Neill's TAS outfit know a thing or two about bike set-up and 'growing' champions.

High accomplishments on the international stage on the Tarmac will not keep Ulster's Jonathan Rea from his deep roots in motocross. Jonathan is a multi-time youth MX champ and is still pretty nifty on a CRF. Those who have been monitoring young Rea's climb through the ranks up to the heights of the WSB championship know that fame and fortune await the Ballyclare man but Johnny wants to put something back into his original choice of sport and his love of off-road racing has driven him to set up a motocross team for next year.

"I just want to set something up that will give young talent a chance to realise their full potential," explains

Johnny. "There are many kids out there who have more talent than money and they deserve a fair shot at the game." Full details on this new British championship MX2 team and rider line-up will be available in next month's DBR.

It's official! Phil McCullough's Moto-One by TAS line-up will be Graeme Irwin and Robert Hamilton in MX2 with Aston Bird flying the flag in the British MX1 class. The team will also compete for the Irish and Ulster titles. Big Phil will want to go out on top as he has told Blarney that this will be his final year on the muck before switching his focus to Tarmac racing in 2010.

Wayne Garrett will race KTM machinery with Ian Spratt and Robert Topping providing the package that Wayne will require if he is to secure his hat trick of Irish and Ulster MX1 titles.

Not one to go without a touch of Irish talent under his awning, Steve Dixon at U-TAG Yamaha has secured the services of Edward Allingham to ride in the UK domestic races with the possibility of a little international experience during the season. This is a good career move for young Edward as the Dixon camp is an ideal team from which to launch his professional adult racing programme. It's going to be a big year ahead for Edward – the jump from youth champion to racing MX2 will be tough, although his sights must be focused on the British U21 title which is a realistic goal.

Martin Barr is currently in the USA and the news is that Martin's enjoying riding his Relentless Suzuki 250F and is fitting right in to Rob Hooper's team. Facing one of the toughest fields in Maxxis MX2 in years, Martin is pumped at the prospect of racing Simpson, Sword and Osbourne for top honours next season.

Irish motocross fans are holding their breath for the ACU and MCUI dates to be announced as the prospect of having Barr and PAR Homes racer Gordon Crockard making the startline for as many home races as

possible is a mouth-watering one.

On the subject of the Crock Star, an industry insider asked me did I think Gordon Crockard had another British championship in him to which I replied "more than one"... I truly believe GC can win his fourth MX1 British championship if he is motivated to do so – which I believe he is! Totally disillusionment thanks to the farce of professional GP motocross and the lack of earning opportunities available has cemented Gordon's decision to compete in mainly domestic championships.

The Wellington Park Hotel in Belfast was the venue for the MRA/MCUI awards, attended by some 250-plus guests who enjoyed great food with equal helpings of banter from fellow competitors. A new award for British champions was presented to Natalie Kane (ladies' MX champion), Edward Allingham (MX2Y) and Philip Loughlin (British enduro champion).

By now the race format for 2009 will have been passed by the MRA. For sure, it will again not suit everybody but that's par for the course with so many agendas in the pot. I for the life of me cannot see why the Irish championship format is not replicated in the Ulster series – for the past three years the Irish format has proved a major success.

Let's be realistic though while remaining positive, we still have to make it real if we want to keep the clubs alive. It's all good having full line-ups for the first two months of the new race season but then the numbers drop significantly. Less championship dates with more 'pay as you go' club race days is for me the key – everybody has a transponder so entering on the day is no big hassle at all.

Whatever the new format, it will be with us until this time next year so embrace it and try to support it – even if it's not really based on your individual needs. Bottom line – enjoy it!

Happy New Year!

Stevie
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BMW's factory effort in next year's WEC will see the German giants take on their European rivals KTM



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BETTER THAN EVER?

THE '09 WEC SEASON HAS EVERYTHING NEEDED TO MAKE IT A TRULY UNFORGETTABLE CHAMPIONSHIP

Words by Jonty Edmunds

Pre-season hype is one thing the World Enduro Championship doesn't enjoy in quite the same way as some 'other' off-road motorcycle series. While motocross and supercross chat rooms are ablaze with pre-championship predictions, the WEC and its riders spend the winter months going about their business with few passing comment on who's gonna do what once the eight-round championship finally kicks off.

If there was ever a WEC season that needed to be 'hyped' it must surely be '09. With '08 one of the best in recent years, next year looks to be even better. The World Enduro Championship is set to deliver the kind of excitement and stimulation that F1 can only dream of.

There's no mistaking the fact that a competitive rivalry between Europe's largest off-road motorcycle manufacturer and Europe's largest motorcycle manufacturer is what will focus most people's attentions on the WEC next year. Folk probably won't be overly worried about things from a manufacturer's point of view, instead enduro fans around the world will be watching to see how several of the world's biggest players perform on new machinery in '09.

The fact that BMW have stepped up to the plate for '09 and signed both David Knight and Juha Salminen eclipses the championship's loss of the UFO Corse Yamaha team – a squad that was one of the world championship's biggest outfits. Instead of '09 starting with talk of downsized and disbanded teams, it will start with talk of commitment and the need for both consistency and speed.

No matter what class you look at '09 will be an interesting year. Starting with Enduro 1 – the class that in part due to the BMW vs KTM duel in E2 and E3 will probably receive a little less attention that it deserves – the big question is can Mika Ahola claim a third consecutive world championship? A rider that for so many years seemed doomed never to fulfil his potential starts '09 as the reigning E1 class champion and a rider very much in form.

Mika has never started a WEC season as a title

favourite, not even this year when he started the championship as reigning Enduro 2 world champion. But in '09 Mika will, without question, start as the man to beat. He'll be on a bike he knows, in a class he knows and, as a rider that now knows what it takes to win a world title, be seriously difficult to beat. KTM have secured the services of former Yamaha rider Simone Albergoni but the Italian has to deliver a much stronger season than the one he did this year if he is to match Mika round after round.

The Enduro 2 class, which this year saw the great Juha Salminen go head-to-head with super-fast Frenchman Johnny Aubert, will see the great Juha Salminen go head-to-head with super-fast Frenchman Johnny Aubert. Or, by virtue of the fact that Aubert is the defending E2 champion, that could be seen as Johnny Aubert going head-to-head with Juha Salminen. While '09 will be a Aubert/Salminen re-match it will see the Frenchman compete for KTM – a first for Johnny having spent the past three years racing for Yamaha – while Salminen will compete for BMW – a first for Juha after nine championships with KTM.

This year's head-to-head ended somewhat prematurely following Juha's mechanical DNF on day one of the third round of the series. But the two riders showed that they genuinely were and are a country mile ahead of every other rider in E2. Next year not only will they have to beat one another but they will have to do it with machinery on which they've never competed in the WEC before.

Both riders will have to adjust not only to new machinery but also to new teams which will have different working practices to those they are used to. Aside from getting their respective bikes to do exactly what they want them to do, both riders will have much to deal with away from the race track too. They say defending a title is harder than winning one in the first place. Well, surely defending one on a new bike must make things just that little bit more challenging. Johnny certainly won't sit back and rest on his laurels and neither will Juha. Defeated for the first time in 10 years

– think about that, it's one hell of a long time to remain undefeated – Juha will want to put his name back where he feels it belongs at the top of the WEC results.

And then there's the Enduro 3 class – the class that attracted more than its fair share of top named riders this season. The big news there – very big news as far as British enduro fans are concerned – is the return of Knight. After two years in the States the big man is back in the WEC and racing for BMW. While it's not confirmed by BMW that David will be competing in E3, for the Manxman to compete in any other class will be almost as big a shock as his and Salminen's switch to BMW.

Knight's return to the WEC is in itself a massive boost for the series. The fact that he is returning with a different manufacturer to the one he's raced with for the last five years makes things even more interesting. Like Salminen the driving force behind DK's decision to change teams was the want for fresh motivation and a new challenge into which he can sink his teeth. Well, he's got exactly what he wanted.

The two big challenges facing Knight are his change of machinery and a return to a very different kind of racing to the one he's been used to during the last two years. Like Salminen and Aubert, DK has to adapt and adjust to his new ride ASAP while also getting himself back into sprint mode.

As if that weren't enough to be getting on with, once Knight does return to WEC battle in Portugal on March 14/15 he will be faced with some seriously hungry competition. KTM have unleashed defending E3 champion Samuli Aro as well as two-time Enduro 1 world champion Ivan Cervantes. Then there's Frenchmen Seb Guillaume and Christophe Nambotin who certainly won't be looking to make life easy for any rider.

Next season will be one of the best in recent years. It might not produce some of the greatest individual performances ever seen but the riders that do eventually win certainly won't have been gifted 'easy' championships.

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SHAUN STAR!



Well I'd just about given up hope of seeing my favourite rider on the cover of my favourite mag and then there he was – Shaun Simpson on the front of the December issue of DBR in my local shop. I was properly pumped!

I've been a big fan of Shaun's for a few years now and it's about time he started to be treated like other major MX stars as he's worked his ass off to get where he is today with a British title and a factory contract for next season. I can't think of another rider who's had as many injuries as Shaun (we can, turn to page 46 – SL) but he's never given up on his dream. He's also the nicest bloke at the races and whenever me and my mates go up to say hello he always has the time to stop and chat and seems interested in what we have to say.

So well done for putting him on the cover – I hope I don't have to wait until he wins next year's MX2 world championship to see him on there again!

Danny, Yorkshire

Glad we've made you happy mate – we've been wanting to stick Shaun on the cover for most of the year but it's not that simple and we had to arrange a special photoshoot with him to get the right shot!

RAMP IT UP!

First off a big thumbs up on December's issue. I have been a big fan of FMX since I started motocross and after reading your freestyle article I am now real eager to start. I've just got one small problem – finding a launch ramp. I've been told of companies in the UK who make ramps for a living but can't find them anywhere – can you help me?

Gary, Scotland

Glad you liked the feature Gary. We can't go publishing people's personal numbers on this page but there's an email on its way with some info that might come in useful...

STAKE OUT!

I've got an important question that needs answering! How come in America and at GPs it is necessary to place collapsible plastic markers around the track – however, at many practice tracks there are sharp wooden stakes close to the track to mark it out? Wouldn't it be better if the track owners replaced them with smaller, blunt plastic ones similar to the ones at the British Masters or BYMX as I feel these stakes are a bit dangerous.

Thomas, Lincs

It's mostly down to a matter of money Thomas – bigger series have bigger bucks...

RIDE GUIDE

Hey, just wanted to say great mag! But the real reason why I'm writing in is because I'm a 16-year-old boy with a bike that I love to ride more than anything and at the moment there is nowhere for me to ride it! If I try to ride it near to where I live there are loads of complaints – what I want to know is if there are so many open fields all owned by the council why can't they just build a few more tracks for an incredible sport. I'm sure I'm not alone in thinking this way and it would keep loads of young guys like me off the streets and on a bike if there were more places to ride.

Tyler, Wilts

It's not as simple as just building a track Tyler – councils love red tape and there are a million and one rules and regulations you need to stick to. The good news is that Wiltshire's a hotbed of motocross so try www.tracksmap.com for somewhere legit you can ride near you...

BENDER!

While at the MXdN I noticed that on Shaun Simpson's KTM the right-hand side rad shroud has a bend in it at the top. After seeing the other KTMs on show in the pits none of them had this. So when I took delivery of the mag this month it came back to me and there it is again on the front cover – the bendy rad shroud – so could you tell me what the reason for this is? And why is it only the right side?

Chris, via email

Shaun actually likes both rad shrouds bent in to stop him getting snarled up on them in corners and if you take a closer look at Tommy Searle's KTM you'll see he actually cuts his down.

SHOWBIZ!

What can I say about the Dirt Bike Show apart from it was brilliant! The main stands of KTM, Suzuki, Yamaha and Kawasaki were amazing, everyone was very helpful and the T+MX and the DBR stands were probably the best.

The trade area had a wide variety to offer and had excellent deals like a Leatt Brace for £185, No Fear complete kit for £65 and Oakley 'O' Frames with 40 tear-offs for £20 – now that's what I call deals. It was also good to see riders like Josh Coppins and Shaun Simpson about but for me the Live Action Arena was good but not as good as other years with only two acts. Though with the lack of room it was a great show. So overall the Dirt Bike Show was a complete success.

Peter, Surrey

Thanks for your letter Peter from Surrey – or should that be Dave from RaceSpec?

STROKER VS THUMPER

I'm trying to settle the age old argument with a university friend which is better – two-strokes or four-strokes? We have a Facebook group set up and would like to gain as much support possible for our chosen cycle type engines so could you please insert a small line in your fantabulous (yes it is a word I invented it which don't make it not a word!) magazine. The link to the group is <http://www.new.facebook.com/group.php?gid=82039650236>

Garry, via email

This topic could run and run...

CHEERS

As the end of season has arrived I'd like to thank everyone who has helped me this year. First of all I would like to say a huge thank you to my mum and dad for all their hard work and the effort they have put into my racing this year – without you I would not have been able to compete in half the events I have.

Also a big thanks to Gaz Crossely (almost my second dad) of White Rose MXC for taking care of the mechanical side of my bikes and Tee Bee Motorcycles for all the help and support they have given me. Then there's Shocktech suspension specialists for their amazing bike set up for me this year, MPS for superb bike tuning and Wallwork building for the huge help at the beginning of this year.

I could not have achieved all this without you – see you all in the 2009 season (apologies if I've missed anyone).

Ash Harland #292, via email

What a nice polite young man – we can tell that your parents have raised you well...



© Chris Hudson



GOT SOMETHING TO SAY?

WELL HERE'S WHERE YOU SHOULD BE SAYING IT...

Write to Rant at the usual address or email us at rant@dirtbikerider.co.uk

All letters/emails must be accompanied by a full address.

Oh and please don't send emails all in capitals. Cheers!

LETTERS WIN PRIZES

Write to Rant, get your letter published and you'll win a one-litre trigger bottle of marvellous bike cleaning fluid Muc-Off. And if we rate your letter highly enough you'll also receive our star prize – this month a pair of Etnies Cinch shoes.





FACE LIFT UNLIMITED

UNBOUND ENERGY GRAPHICS

If you want to start the season with a new look for your bike then check out the full range of Face Lift Unlimited Team/Works graphics kits that come complete with a seat cover for the bargain price of just £99.95! Pictured here is the all-new Unbound Energy graphics set that's already proving to be very popular.

Price: £99.95

Supplier: motoskinzfx.co.uk

Contact: 01794 390600



SHIFT

AGENT HELMET

This sweet looking polycarbonate shelled Shift helmet exceeds all safety standards and comes with some features you'd expect on high level helmets such as removable cheek pads too. All in all it's a sound helmet at an even sounder price!

Price: £85

Supplier: shifteurope.com

Contact: 0191 487 6300



PARK TOOL

MECHANIC'S BACKPACK

WORKSTATION

The Park Tool Backpack Workstation is a rucksack style bag that functions like a mobile tool chest! The backpack doesn't come with any tools but does securely holding on to your favourite screwdrivers, spanners, sockets and stuff even out on the trail making it perfect for outriders or extreme endurance type travellers.

Price: £79.99

Supplier: ultimatepursuits.co.uk

Contact: sales@ultimatepursuits.co.uk



FOX RACING

POD MX KNEE BRACE

Pod MX knee braces are gaining popularity with riders around the world as the easy to fit and comfortable carbon-fibre braces are very light while their revolutionary hinge system follows the knee's natural range of movement making them easy to walk in too. All in all they're a very protective and well performing product that are foolishly overlooked by many riders.

Price: £199.99 per brace

Supplier: foxracing.com

Contact: 0191 487 6100

ANSWER

ROCKSTAR GEAR

Bringing together some of the most solidly-built, sweet-ass racewear on the market today and one of the globe's coolest energy drinks was a very smart thing to do as Answer and Rockstar found out last year with their limited edition racewear. For 2009 the collaboration is back and the kit is available for both adults and kids and this time there's an awesome looking helmet added to the range too! Check it out at an Answer dealer near you...

Price: Adult Pants £99.99 Jersey £29.99

Glove £24.99 Helmet £99.99 Kids Pants £84.99

Jersey £21.50 Glove £21.50

Supplier: apico.co.uk

Contact: 0870 777 9201



MSR

STARLET GIRLS GEAR

Malcolm Smith was the smiley chap who starred in On Any Sunday. MSR is Malcolm's off-road parts and clothing company. Starlet girls gear is MSR's female specific off-road racewear. Check it out at a dealer near you or online at www.msrracing.com!

Price: Pants £79.99
Jersey £24.99
Gloves £19.99
Supplier: apico.co.uk
Contact: 0870 777 9201



ONE INDUSTRIES

KOMBAT HELMET

Starting out as an uber-trick helmet and graphics manufacturer, One Industries have grown and grown to the point where they're about ready to take over the world. Proving that they haven't forgotten their roots the California-based creators of all things trick have rehatched the design of the Kombat helmet for 2009. Still cheap as chips and more stylish than a suited mafia henchman you'd be a fool not to check out a One Industries Kombat brain bucket at a dirt bike dealer near you.

Price: £119.95
Supplier: rushracing.co.uk
Contact: 01404 549696

FOX RACING

COMP 5 BOOTS

These Comp 5 boots are bargain priced but still very high quality items from one of the sport's leading clothing manufacturers – Fox. Engineered for the entry level racer but still looking and feeling top notch, the Comp 5s are also built with all day comfort in mind making them an excellent choice for trail and enduro riders.

Price: £125.00
Supplier: foxracing.com
Contact: 0191 487 6100



FRO SYSTEMS

2009 MOTOCROSS HARDWARE

Despite their company name leading you to believe otherwise, Bristolian mentalists Freestylextreme are your one-stop online shop for Fro Systems stuff this Christmas. They're currently carrying a ton of stock so check out their website now for a plethora of gift ideas!

Price: various
Supplier: freestylextreme.com
Contact: 0117 967 2240

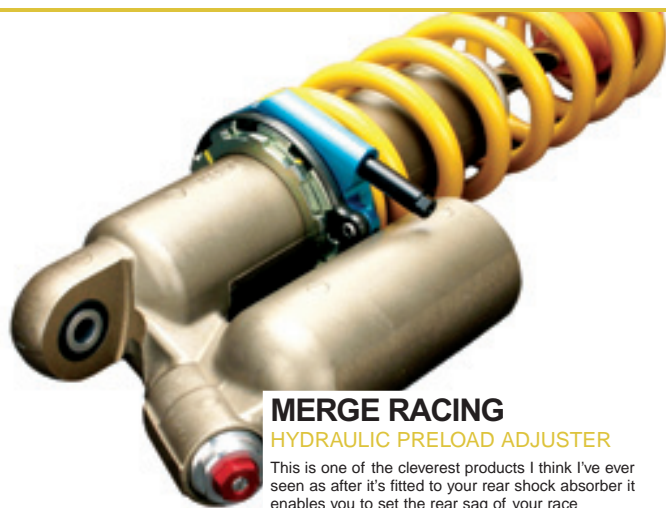




MECHANIX GLOVES

The Mechanix work glove is used by more mechanics and technicians in motorsport than any other glove. Comfortable, resilient to chemicals and oils as well as hard wearing these Mechanix gloves are just the thing for those long days spent spinning spanners.

Price: £17.99
Supplier: ultimatepursuits.co.uk
Contact: sales@ultimatepursuits.co.uk



MERGE RACING HYDRAULIC PRELOAD ADJUSTER

This is one of the cleverest products I think I've ever seen as after it's fitted to your rear shock absorber it enables you to set the rear sag of your race machine quickly and easily with just an 8-mm t-bar. This Merge Racing product offers 15mm of adjustment allowing you to fine tune the ride height of your race bike quickly at the side of the track without having to resort to a hammer and punch! Available for Showa, Kayaba and WP shocks this product is a must-have for serious racers and suspension tuners.

Price: £149.99
Supplier: ultimatepursuits.co.uk
Contact: sales@ultimatepursuits.co.uk

FOX RACING SHUTTLE GEAR BAG

Kit bag technology has come a long way in the past few years and now unless your holdall has wheels, a plethora of pockets and a vented area for your boots then you may as well just quit racing – just kidding! Seriously though this Fox Shuttle has all the features of a high end bag like you'd expect and is rugged too making it an ideal way of transporting your kit to the races.

Price: £90
Supplier: foxracing.com
Contact: 0191 487 6100



VENHILL CABLES AND HYDRAULIC HOSES

Venhill have long been Britain's favourite supplier of aftermarket braided brake hoses and Featherlight throttle and clutch cables and it's not surprising because the Dorking-based engineering legends sure do lovingly manufacture a nice bit of kit. The latest top-notch product to come out Surrey includes these colour co-ordinated hoses and cables in colours to suit each and every manufacturer's latest models!

Price: call for details
Supplier: venhill.co.uk
Contact: 01306 885111



ANIMAL GPR1 HELMET

Animal and KBC have teamed up to create this all-new Animal GPR1 helmet which is hitting stores round about now!

Price: £129.99
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Contact: sales@ultimatepursuits.co.uk





ARAI

VX3 SALMINEN REPLICA HELMET

If you like pictures of big scary bears on the side of your helmet then Arai have gone to the trouble of adding one to their outstanding range of VX3 helmets just for you. The VX3 Salminen replica is available in red, grey or blue, available to fit most size of heads, is of course ACU gold stamped and quite possibly the best helmet you'll ever buy which makes it a double bonus if you're a fan of big scary bears – growl!

Price: £379.99

Supplier: apico.co.uk

Contact: 0870 777 9201



MOTORBOOKS

HURRICANE – THE BOB HANNAH STORY BOOK

Bob Hannah is one of the greatest riders in American motocross history and he certainly has a tale or two to tell which is why this book is a must-have read for all MX enthusiasts.

Price: £19.99 inc free P+P (UK only)

Supplier: dirtbikerider.com

Contact: 01524 834066



GSP VIDEO

THE NEXT GENERATION 3

From the makers of The Next Generation and The Next Generation 2 comes the latest installment of youth motocross film trickery – The Next Generation 3. This 45-minute film takes an in-depth look at the newest and speediest off-road talent from around the world and features footage from the USA, the UK and Europe. With more speedy nippers than you can point a poisoned pineapple at this wide-open DVD is a must-have for all fans of schoolie MX.

Price: £19.99

Supplier: tngmx.com

Contact: sales@tngmx.com

OGIO

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You can stash a lot of stuff inside an OGIO backpack without ever having to worry about a seam a splitting, a zip a popping or a strap a pulling away like a V12 from some traffic lights. In fact the damned things are so delightfully tough, durable and spacious inside that your biggest worry with an OGIO backpack – like this here Mastermind one – is if you'll be strong enough to pick the sucker up after you've filled it with stuff and things.

Price: £59.99

Supplier: ultimatepursuits.co.uk

Contact: sales@ultimatepursuits.co.uk



VON ZIPPER

MX GOGGLES

As used by Supercross Lites champ J-Law these Von Zipper MX goggles are the coolest thing to come out of California since the square tomato.

Price: £48.99

Supplier: apico.co.uk

Contact: 0870 777 9201



FOX RACING

ALL WEATHER PRO GEAR

Winter's coming and whether you're a hardy motocross racer who wants to keep on pounding out training laps, an enduro racer, trail rider or even a fashion conscious trials guy then this Fox Racing All Weather Pro Gear could just be the thing to keep you dry and toasty warm this wet and windy winter.

Price: Jacket £140 Pant £120

Supplier: foxracing.com

Contact: 0191 487 6100



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A YEAR IN PHOTOGRAPHS

A SELECTION OF 15 FAVOURITE SNAPS FROM 2008...

Words and Photos by Sully



Main: Tom Church trains in the Welsh wilderness before the first GP of 2008 which proved to be TC's best ever year in world championship competition – 17th in the final MX1 standings is a deserved reward for all his hard pre-season work

Left: Motocross is one of the most physically demanding sports in the world and it's even tougher when you're full of the flu bug. Antonio Cairoli had to fight the affects of humid heat and a dose of the influenza virus by running a drinks system at the Portuguese GP



Main: Even though he's close to being at his physical peak Stephen Sword still feels the effects of almost 40 minutes of bar-to-bar racing

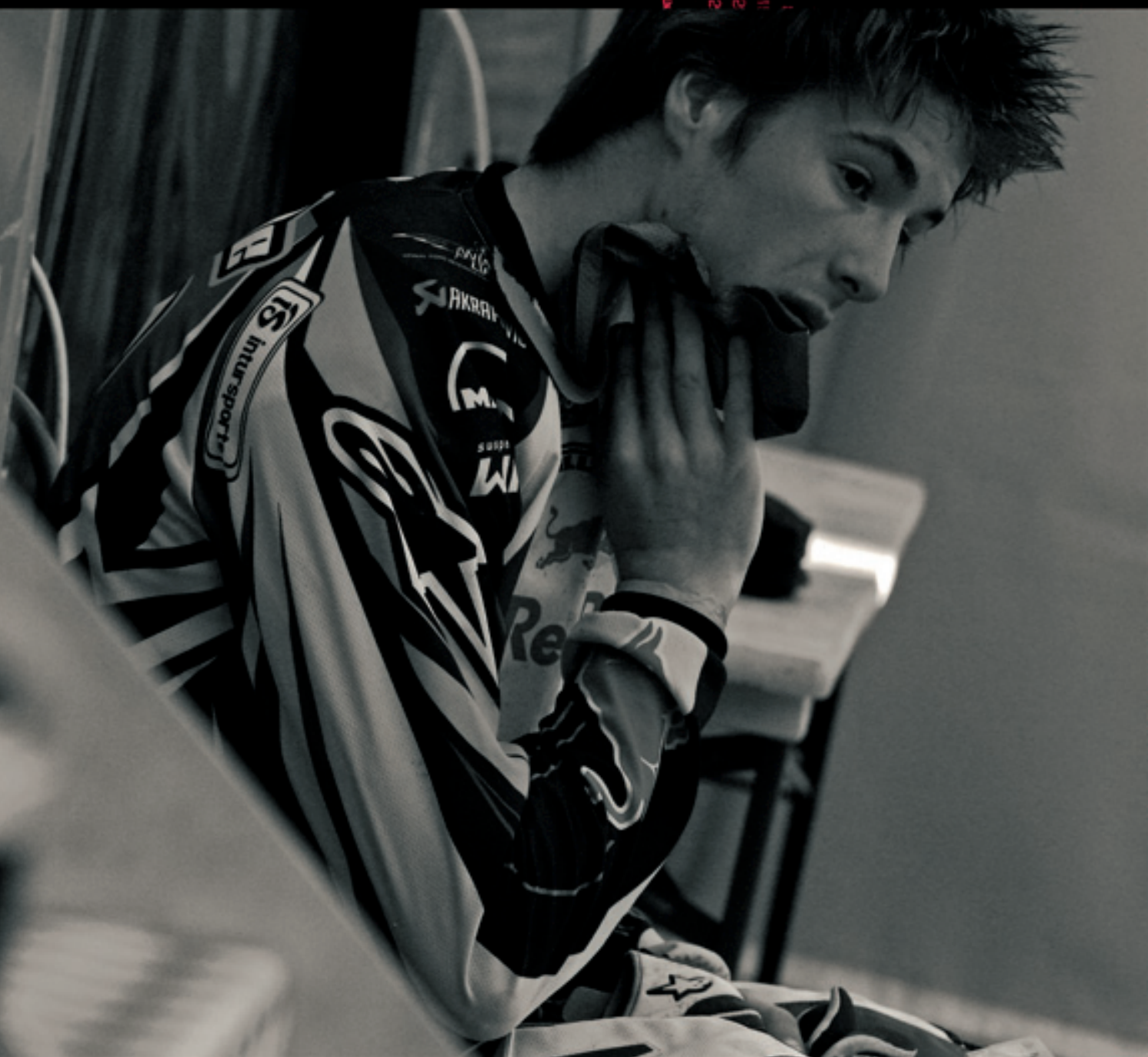
Above: GPKR's Sebastien Pourcel is one of the most entertaining racers to watch in MX1 as he constantly battles with his bike right on the very limit

Left: Sometimes to get the shot you want you have to think outside the box. This picture of Cyril Despres at the Tough One was taken with a three-second exposure with the flash manually fired just at the right moment to make the shot work. It probably took me 12 attempts to get it right...



Main: Tommy Searle ponders what he might have done differently in order to win the MX2 world championship and what his future in America might hold

Left: Some of the finest racing at the GPs happens in the MX2 qualification heats as riders jostle for one of the lucky 13 qualifying positions. Here in Faenza another one leaves the line...







Opposite Page: Billy MacKenzie lays down some factory Honda firepower through the leaves at Hawkstone Park's pre-season international

Left: Khounsith Vongsana is just one of about 15 French kids who is capable of scoring points in MX2 – viva la France!

Below: A full-time GP ride with Swift Suzuki didn't quite work out for Brad Anderson who had an off-season by his standards but looked more controlled and way cooler than ever before

Bottom: Things are always tight in turn one and it's the same at Lommel in Belgium where nobody's willing to give an inch



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Top left: Salisbury's Andy Trollope was one of the many riders who sadly didn't make it through the 2008 season uninjured – stay strong and get well soon guys!

Top right: There's always a flurry of activity down in pit lane as technicians and girlfriends scribble on pit boards

Middle: Canada Heights saw more than its fair share of snow this season with both the Brit MX and DEP races seeing the white stuff fall from the sky

Main: Two-stroke crusader David Willet powers past a Hawkstone fence that's probably been stood there for 50 years or more which means it's already seen the rise and fall of the two-smokers – will it witness their comeback?

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HOLY ROLLER!

JAKE 'THE REVEREND' NICHOLLS IS AIMING TO MAKE 2009 HIS BREAKTHROUGH YEAR ABOARD A KTM UK-BACKED MACHINE BUT TO STAY INJURY-FREE WILL HE NEED A SPOT OF DIVINE INTERVENTION?

Words by **Sean Lawless** Photos by **Sutty**

*For 2009 Jake's traded
yellow for orange...*



For a rider nicknamed 'The Reverend', Jake Nicholls must wonder sometimes whether the big fella upstairs has got it in for him. KTM UK's 18-year-old new signing has got the speed and skills to challenge for top honours at home and abroad – but he's spent almost as much time in A&E than he has turning laps.

Jake first appeared as a blip on the DBR radar thanks to our test rider Tony Marshall. Tony works for the Nicholls family's Trucks R Us/Fork Rent empire and spent a lot of hours riding with a juvenile Jake who at the time was a top title challenger in the youth divisions. And even back then it was clear that Jake had a lot of speed – when he wasn't slinging himself down the track.

It's a crash-happy habit Jake's still not completely grown out of but is determined to rectify as he aims to turn 2009 into the year he makes his presence felt on the world and domestic scenes.

"Top 10 at the end of the year in the world championship is definitely my goal. Having been so close to getting top 10s this year and being on a better bike and in a better team and at full fitness I think I can definitely end up in the top 10 and the top three in the British championship. I just want to stay injury-free – that's the main thing for the start of the year. Start good and stay injury-free but I've got to try and find a different way to go about it because I'm usually either really average at the start of the year or I hurt myself.

"I'm already training harder than ever before for this time of the year so hopefully I'll be on it at the start of the year and carry it through. I'm working hard and hungry for next year."

The 2008 season was a breakthrough one for Shaun Simpson who's now moved up to the full-factory Red Bull KTM team. Jake's stepped into his shoes on the KTM UK squad – one of the hot tickets when it comes to MX2 rides in the country – and is aiming to emulate the young Scot's performance.

"The KTM ride is a step up – the bike is a step above anything else I've ever rode and also the support. We've seen how it's worked out for Shaun Simpson this year and I'm sure that if I work hard enough I'm a good enough rider to do a similar sort of thing."

And it's not just the bike and the set-up that Jake's happy with – he's also looking forward to working alongside new team-mate Stephen Sword. "I've trained with Stephen for the last two years with Dave Thorpe so I know him pretty well and we get on. Having someone that experienced as a team-mate, I can't think of anything better. It's all positive."

Picking up a ride with KTM UK at the end of the '08 season is a result that was hardly on the cards earlier in the year as Jake's campaign started badly and then went rapidly downhill.

"At the end of 2007 I broke my arm real badly and I could only start riding middle of January this year. Then I put my back out – it was actually something from the

Jake's 2008 season started badly but a shake-up in his training regime quickly paid dividends

previous year when I crashed really badly at Namur and put my pelvis out. I didn't really realise and it didn't give me too much gip and then cycling one day completely put it out.

"A chiropractor clicked me back into place but that gave me big trouble for three or four weeks and then two weeks on from that was the first round of the British championship and I was really unprepared and on a standard bike. I qualified badly and then in the first race I landed on someone and crashed and punctured my lung, broke two ribs, broke my collarbone and tore some muscles in my shoulder. That was that for three-and-a-half months..."

"I came back at Lyng and I actually had my best ever British championship position in the first race which was fifth but in the second race I was hammered. I struggled then and for the next three GPs I didn't qualify. At the first one I was really close and got 13th in the qualifying race and then got further away for the next two."

Top-flight motocross is tough enough if you're fully fit and by now Jake was seriously race rusty, prompting crisis talks within his Swift Suzuki team. But help was at hand in the imposing shape of Steve Potter, a heavyweight boxer who's represented his country at amateur level.

"Everyone came together and said 'something's got to change' and that's when I got together with Steve for training and it all seemed to click really. Sweden's one of my favourite GP tracks anyway and I started training two weeks prior to it with Steve. I changed my training

regime on the bike as well – I rode more and did more sprints – and it came together. I got seventh in my heat race which is my best ever and I scored two points there which was a good stepping stone."

After such a bad start to the season the new-look Nicholls – he lost three-quarters-of-a-stone training with Steve – was on a roll.

"South Africa was really good – I qualified well and the first race I was 16th which was my best finish ever and then in the second I got 11th which was unbelievable because I didn't even get a good start. With the build up of frustration from the whole year I got the bit between my teeth and that set me off and from then on I progressed – I didn't actually get a better result than that but I rode a lot better. In Ireland I was running ninth and then my bike blew up which was the most frustrating thing of the year pretty much because I was on Swordy and Boog."

Careers can be built or broken by a single decision and Jake's 2009 prospects could have been completely different if he hadn't come away from South Africa on a high.

"In the middle of this year I was going to go on a 450 and give up on MX2 until I went well in South Africa – then I realised that if I lost a bit more weight I could do it. And I lost the weight and started feeling good on it again. I felt a bit bunched up on a 250 but then we set the bike up differently – made it for a big person."

Jake was already a 'big person' at 15 when he moved into the adult ranks under the wing of Mark Chamberlain and his MotoVision Suzuki team >>



JAKE ON...

MOTOCROSS >>

"Motocross is everything to me. Apart from family and close friends nothing else means anything to me at all. I think I can be world champion – I believe that and keep telling myself that and that's what I'm working for. That's my all-time aim and always has been and always will be until I do it. I've always watched the US championships but I've only ever wanted to be world champion."

HIS NICKNAME >>

"There's a church in my garden. Jonathan Wright called me it one time and it's stuck."

HIS HEROES >>

"Ben Townley's amazing – I remember when he was this chubby kid riding for Phase Suzuki but he just worked so hard. Josh Coppins is another rider who works so hard and he's such a nice bloke. And I could have cried when David Philippaerts won the world title – this year he's shown everyone his true colours and how aggressive he is and I really agree with the way he is. He's worked his nuts off to win that title."

Starting the season with an injury meant Jake struggled to make the cut in the early GPs

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JAKE ON...

THE SCHOOLIE YEARS >>>

"I've been riding since I was four but I've probably had about five years off through injury. I was second in the British championship in the 60s – should have really won it but my back wheel fell out but we won't mention that to dad. And then injuries, injuries, injuries... I was leading the British championship the next year by a long way in front of Tommy Searle and people like that and then broke my arm. I struggled a bit on the 80s – I was second to Tommy for most of the year and then hurt myself at the end of it.

"I had a break because I was too big for the 80s and got on a 125 when I was 12 but obviously couldn't race it until I was 13 on a Dutch licence. I finally got my ACU licence and then the first race I did I smashed my elbow to bits so I was out for a year with that. I came back and was about 10th in my first British championship race and got a footpeg through the same elbow. The next year I got third in the British championship and could have won it at the last round but got taken out by Ray Rowson and that was my last schoolboy year.

"I've always been a quite tidy rider and in the schoolboys I used to crash like three times a year but those three times would be absolutely huge. My dad used to find it a bit weird – he'd be like 'you're not trying hard enough' – but that's just how it was and then all of a sudden it would be 'your time's up, boom!' and I'd have a huge one. I broke my humerus four times in a row."

SILVER SPOONS >>>

"I know some people think I've had everything handed to me on a plate and it drives me mental to be honest, it drives me nuts. It's so easy for people to say it – and I can see why they say it because I am lucky – but I work hard as well. Everyone who knows me well knows I'm not a brat and my old man disciplines me. He's not a push over.

"But it does get to me and to be honest it's one of the things that drives me. My aim is to get a ride that's nothing to do with him – I wanted to do it for 2009 but it didn't work out that way because of the way the expenses went for the GPs. I cried for ages at the end of this year when I found out he was going to have to help me again because it really does me in.

"When he told me he was going to have to finance GPs I even contemplated not doing them because I know, without being big-headed, that I could have got a British championship ride for free. It's so frustrating thinking that he has to pay. It winds me up big time and I can't wait until I can pay him back and make him proud."

After Shaun Simpson's meteoric rise in 2008 Jake's hoping his move to KTM UK will have the same effect

in 2006, contesting the Maxxis and U21s series with a couple of tastes of GP competition thrown in for good measure.

"The U21s didn't go too well because I hurt myself early on in the year – I still got fifth in the championship and won three or four rounds out of the five or six I did. But I struggled that year – I had some good results but I was really inconsistent. I got first reserve at my second GP. On the last lap of the LCQ I got knocked from fourth to first reserve – at the time that was just the worse thing ever.

"The next year my dad was helping the team so it became Fork Rent Suzuki and that was a really good year. I got on really well with Mark Chamberlain – he's helped me a lot. I owe a lot to him. I'm pretty inexperienced with racing to be honest because of how many injuries I've had. I didn't actually race all that much in the schoolboys at all and was pretty inexperienced in the adults back then and Mark helped me a lot.

"The third GP of the year I qualified quite easily and that got the ball rolling and I think I qualified for eight or nine GPs after that. They were good bikes and a good team and one of my best mates – Jason Dougan – was my team-mate so it was pretty much a happy camp the whole time. We had

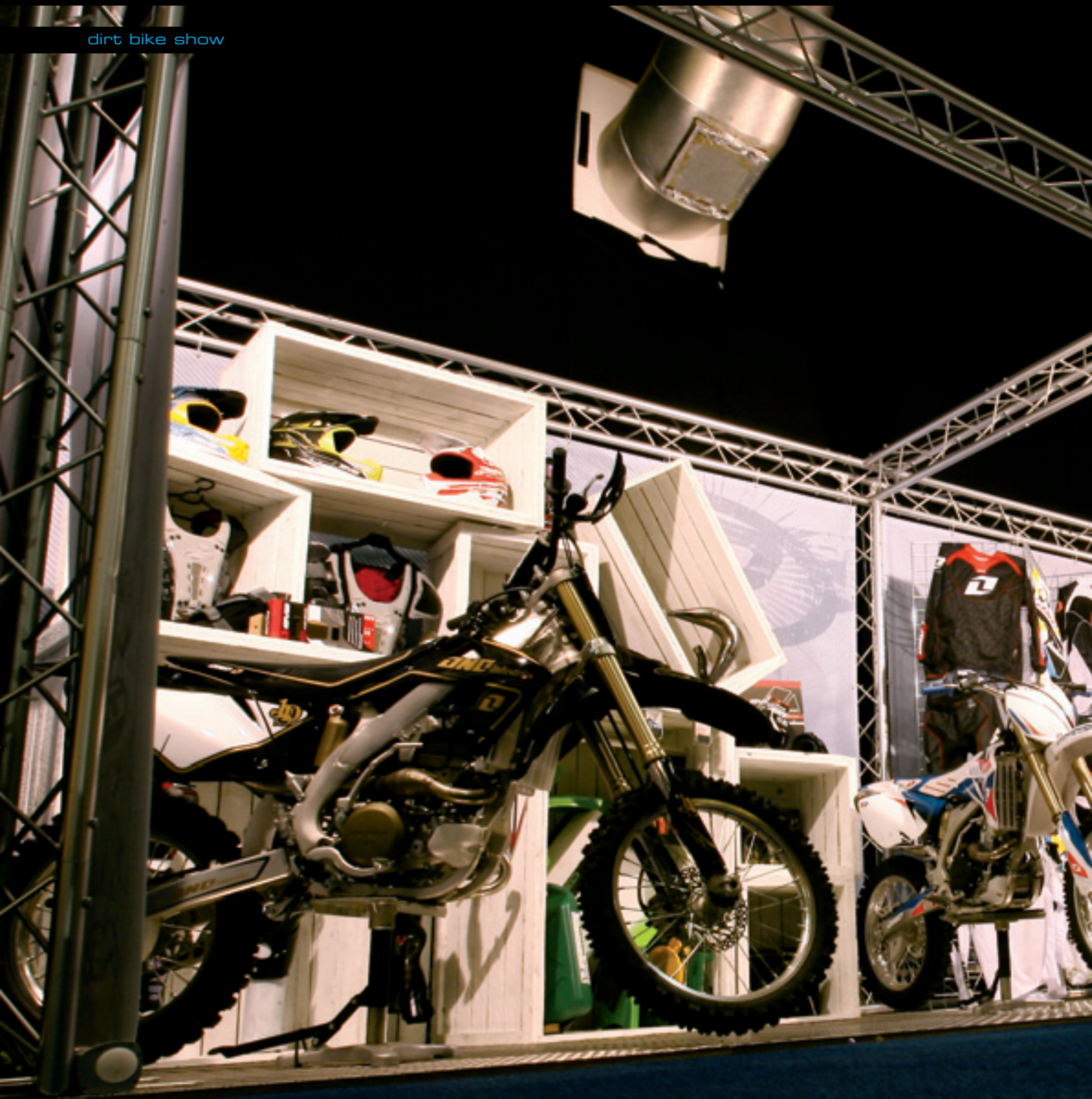
a good year although it ended on a bad note when I broke the same elbow I'd broken in previous years real badly. But other than that it was a real good year and I learned so much off the Chamberlains.

"And this year's been good as well. Mark Banks helped a lot with the team but it was just a shame I couldn't get it going at the start of the year. Obviously I got some good results at the end of the year which helped me get a ride with KTM UK for '09. I'm happy and lucky to be given the opportunity to ride a KTM."

When we interviewed Jake he'd brought his practice bike along and within a few laps it was crystal clear he'd gelled quickly with his new mount.

"I'm already getting on with the bike real good and we haven't had the good engines yet. I go to Holland for January and February which is where the team's based so I'll be living there with my mechanic Mick Day. We'll be doing lots of sand testing – my weakness is sand for some reason even though I've grown up in the stuff. I seem to enjoy hardpack a lot more which is quite lucky really looking at the world championship calendar. So I've definitely got to work on my sand riding and also it's good to test the bikes in the sand because of how much strain it puts on them."





ONE INDUSTRIES >>

With a brand-new range of One Industries racewear and more stunning One Industries sticker sets than you could ever imagine, the West Country boys from Rush Racing had a gert lush time meeting and greeting customers old and new.



PEEPSHOW!

THERE ARE PLENTY OF BIKES, BITS AND BABES TO BE SEEN AT THIS YEAR'S #1 OFF-ROAD EXHIBITION – THE DIRT BIKE SHOW!

Words and photos by Sully

Europe's biggest annual off-road exhibition – the Dirt Bike Show – proves to be a massive success once more as it pulls in an enormous 18,000 off-road fans over a four-day period. With over 150 stands showing product at the ninth running of the DBS, each and every visitor leaves with a whopping smile on their face after enjoying a great day out.

Running earlier than normal this year, the DBS gives fans a chance to see the brand-new 2009 model bikes for the first time. Those racy models along with some other racy models and three hall's worth of new kit and bargains galore – plus all the crazy shenanigans going on in the Live Arena – mean there's more to enjoy than ever before.

There's also an abundance of stars present too with racers including DBR columnists Billy MacKenzie, Stephen Sword, Gordon Crockard and Geoff Walker as well as other top riders such as Shaun Simpson, Jake Nicholls and Tom Church all ready to pop a signature on whatever is pushed their way. And if that's not enough top talent to wet your whistle then how about TV celebrity Charley Boorman who flashed his smile and bared his soul during an in-depth interview on the Dirt Bike Rider stage!

All-in-all the '09 edition DBS is a great success and despite the threat of a global recession and a so-called credit crunch looming on the horizon one thing is obvious – off-road sport is alive and well and the people who make this sport what it is are as mad-keen as ever.

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GAS GAS >>

This is Chloe. Chloe was working at the show for UK Gas Gas importer John Shirt who's kindly (nearly) agreed to loan DBR this trials bike for a long-term test over the winter months – cheers for keeping the seat warm pet!



FOX RACING >>

Hidden away in a grotto like labyrinth were the very latest 2009 designs from Fox Racing. Fox Europe's marketing coordinator Wayne Dobson was so busy showing off the new range – including this sweet V3 helmet – during the four days of the DBS that he had to have a wee break from work afterwards bless him.



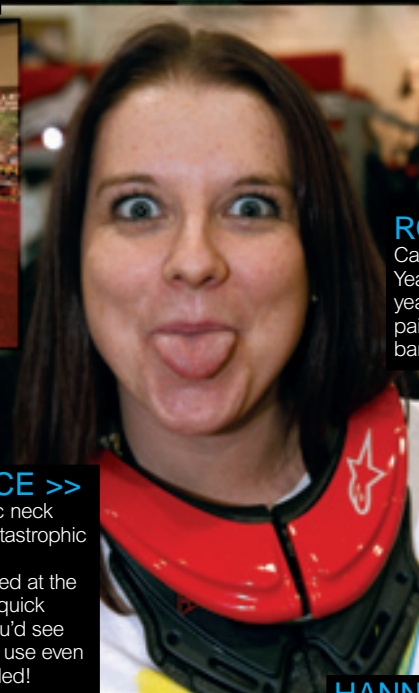
ISO2 NUTRITION >>

ISO2 are the new kids on the nutritional products block and even though they're a freshly formed company have successfully signed some top riders including Geoff Walker, Carl Nunn and Gordon Crockard who's pictured here playing pocket billiards as he shakes hands with ISO2 sexpot Stu.



SHERCO ENDURO >>

Bonjour! This French built Sherco 4.5 enduro weapon is a serious bit of kit and created a fair stir with show goers.



ALPINESTARS NECK BRACE >>

Priced at around £440 the Alpinestars Bionic neck support is designed to reduce the risk of catastrophic neck injury – much like the ground-breaking Leatt-Brace. The Alpinestars support is hinged at the rear and clamped together at the front by a quick release lever system that's similar to what you'd see on a pair of Tech 10 boots making it easy to use even for the simplest of people – our Sarah included!



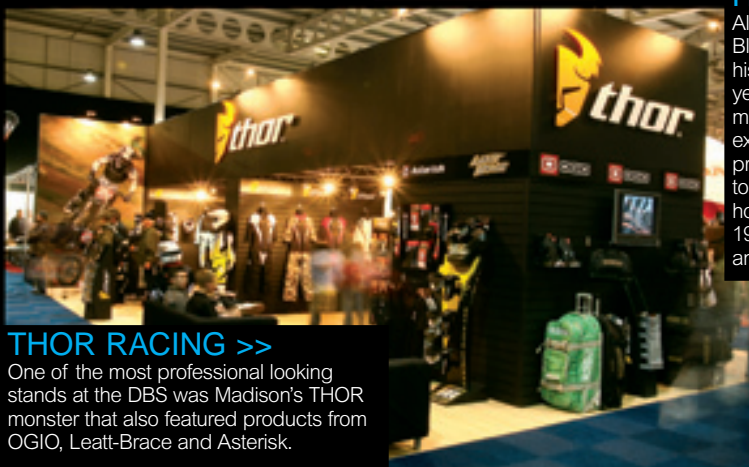
ROB KINSEY ART >>

Can you tell what it is yet? Racer X Artist of the Year Rob Kinsey spent all four days of this year's DBS working on his latest creation – this painting of David Bailey and Ricky Johnson going bar-to-bar at the 1986 Anaheim supercross.



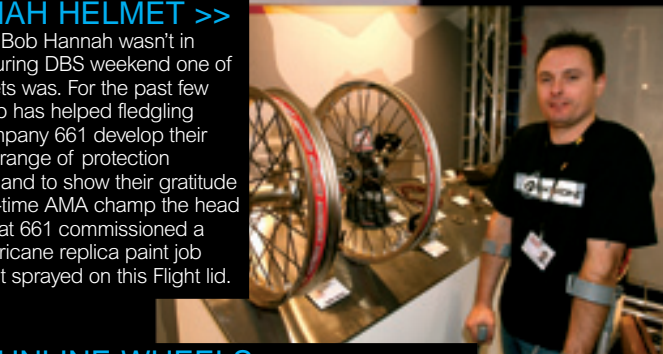
HANNAH HELMET >>

Although Bob Hannah wasn't in Blighty during DBS weekend one of his helmets was. For the past few years Bob has helped fledgling moto company 661 develop their excellent range of protection products and to show their gratitude to the six-time AMA champ the head honchos at 661 commissioned a 1978 Hurricane replica paint job and had it sprayed on this Flight lid.



THOR RACING >>

One of the most professional looking stands at the DBS was Madison's THOR monster that also featured products from OGIO, Leatt-Brace and Asterisk.



SUNLINE WHEELS >>

Sunline are set to enter the aftermarket wheel wars with these yet to be priced puppies that will be imported into the UK by MMA Sports.



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D-ZIGN >>

D-Zign's Lee Fareham, speedway mechanic Nick Thorp and George Roth from Relentless all teamed up to create a free to enter holeshot challenge competition that ran throughout the four days of the DBS on Lee's D-Zign custom helmets stand. A timing device was fitted to the clutch of a speedway machine and competitors lined up to see who had the quickest reactions with the fastest time winning an Arai helmet with a Relentless team-edition paint job. The eventual winner of the helmet was Mark Hucklebridge – who's gonna raffle the lid off to raise funds for the ACU Youth Academy – with a time of .1206 while Ollie Busby was second with hottie Charlotte 'Charlie' Cooper a close third. Lee and Nick are now planning to come back next year with an even better holeshot challenge that includes engine noises and everything.



DEP PIPES >>

If those 99 pence X-Ray specs you bought from your local joke shop actually worked this is what you'd see if you looked at a DEP S7 System front pipe. But if they did actually work then I suspect that you wouldn't waste your time looking at a piece of finely crafted metal...



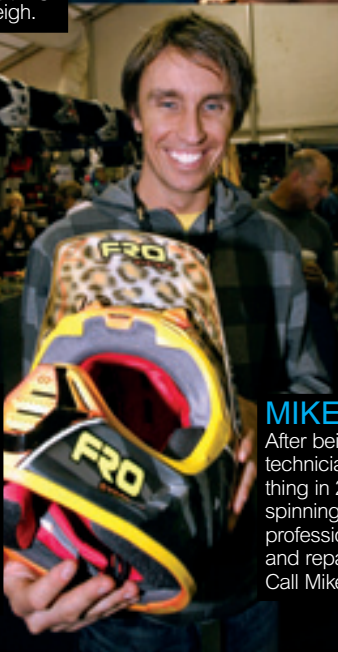
SHOW FANS >>

Despite the impending financial doom and gloom forecast by the daily papers on a daily basis there was no stopping these show goers from having a great time at Stoneleigh.



FRO SYSTEMS HELMET >>

If you've got 400 bones burning a hole in your pocket then you too can have this Fro Systems Trance custom paint job* sprayed on a helmet of your choice. Featuring variegated gold and silver leaf, pin-striping, under peak leopard print and your own name and race number this awesome design is just the thing to help you show your allegiance to the Fro brand. *Grinning idiot not included.



MIKE FORSTER >>

After being with the team for seven years, former Pioneer Yamaha head technician Mike Forster is going freelance and will be doing his own thing in 2009 under the banner of MX Pro Tech. After successfully spinning spanners for the last 28 years, Mike is now offering a range of professional services that include complete bike prep, engine rebuilds and repairs as well as suspension servicing and trackside set-up. Call Mike on **07980 174747** to see what he can do for you!



SIXSIXONE >>

Tom Church, his eyebrows and the factory CCM team will be protected by 661 in 2009. Here TC gets his hands on the new design of helmet himself. Ray Rowson and Jason Dougan will be sporting in Brit MX and MX1 GP action next year.



BMW >>

BMW had a whole bunch of dirt scoots on their stand including this gorgeous ready-to-race G450X.



SHAUN SIMPSON >>

The brand-new British MX2 champion Shaun Simpson was in high demand at this year's show with fans, sponsors and the media all wanting to get a hold of the throttle yanking youngster and shake his hand.

DK OFF-ROAD >>

Knocking out a plethora of Delkevic bits and bobs and RG3 clamps in the trade hall was DK Off-Road's Mike Shaw.



DBS SHOW >>

Dirt Bike Show promoters Promoto had so much dirt bike related goodness to cram inside the three halls that it wouldn't all fit! So the off-road fun began before punters even entered the Stoneleigh Exhibition Centre's doors with regular bike trials demos and a kidney-jarring simulator ride that replicated a trip around the Hawkstone Park motocross circuit.



10th ANNIVERSARY BERCY,
1992, + FRED BOLLEY
BRIEFLY LENDS NEW US
SUPERSTAR JEREMY
MCGRATH (HONDA, 3)



BERCY BEAT!

ONCE THE HOT OFF-SEASON TICKET FOR AMERICAN ACES, PARIS BERCY HAS SUFFERED FROM A LACK OF TOP-FLIGHT STATESIDE INTEREST IN RECENT YEARS – BUT WILL JAMES STEWART'S PRESENCE IN 2008 REVERSE THE TREND?

Words and photos by Jack Burnicle

Has the arrival in Paris of James Stewart at last turned the tide back in favour of the brilliant Bercy Supercross? Until 10 years ago the best American racers were annually enticed across the Atlantic in their brief off-season by the glittering reputation of Paris Bercy. But when a youthful triple 125cc AMA champ called Ricky Carmichael came over, crashed and broke his collarbone in 1998 he never returned!

It was left to enduring legend Jeremy McGrath to shore up Bercy's fading grandeur alongside hordes of keen young Frenchmen, led by the man who's won most often there – David Vuillemin – while many fellow Americans priced themselves out of the promoter's range.

Organisers Lariviere were forced to create a 'USA versus the Rest' 125 contest to ensure survival but Bubba Stewart's appearance may help resuscitate the magic of Bercy.

It was back in 1984 that Lariviere, Parisian publishers of the world's oldest motorcycle magazine Moto Revue (born 1913) and its sister Moto Verte (their 'DBR' equivalent) plus several major rock music rags invented the idea of a supercross in the spectacular new Palais Omnisports. Promoter Xavier Ouduoard made a late dash to the States before the inaugural event in March 1984 and tempted over Honda factory friends David Bailey and Johnny O'Mara and Yamaha's Broc Glover. Broc asked if he could bring his team-mate – a bold youth called

Ricky Johnson – and this quartet duly took Bercy by storm.

O'Mara won the first night but Bailey's second night triumph crowned him 'King of Bercy' after a scorching contest with O'Show and Johnson. The winner had captivated the crowd with his own introduction. "Bonsoir! My name is David Bailey." Johnson, a quick learner, was also loudly acclaimed for his aeronautical acrobatics and "Bonsoir Paree" greeting!

Bercy 2 took place in December that year. "It was time for a vacation but difficult to turn down such a big tax-free lump of dough," confessed Bailey! He and O'Mara were also attracted by the razzmatazz of Bercy with vividly creative rider presentations and dazzling dancing girls as



well as the input of US track builder John Savitski. Music played a major part in Paris too – Van Halen, Yes and Huey Lewis dominated the first Bercy SX, Ray Parker Junior, Simple Minds and ZZ Top the second!

In spring every European had been lapped by the American formation flyers. Come December, O'Mara beat Bailey again in a furious first night final after Glover had stalled and Johnson punctured so they were joined on the rostrum by deafeningly popular little Belgian Eric Geboers.

Glover, clad in JT pink, took control of the second night final while Johnson fell before forcing back to third past Bailey. Ahead, O'Show was crowned King with a 1-2 overall and history was made when Finnish teenager Pekka Vehkonen charged his Cagiva to fifth place and became the first Euro to avoid

being lapped by the visitors!

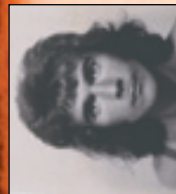
O'Mara did it again 12 months later, winning the second night after Johnson had gladdened French hearts with his maiden victory on the first evening. Dutchman Dave Strijbos mounted the second night rostrum with O'Mara and Glover, ahead of first time US visitor Jeff Ward.

In 1986 the Americans entered aboard an aeroplane – 'The Spirit of Bercy' – and on his final racing visit David Bailey became King again over three hard-fought contests. Ward beat Johnson and Bailey on the opening night before David retaliated on night two in front of new team-mate Micky Dymond and Ward after Johnson had clashed with Ron Lechien. The final night saw Dymond narrowly beat Bailey, Johnson and Glover amid absolute pandemonium!

>>



KING AT LAST! RICKY 'TOO HIP' JOHNSON WHIPS TO VICTORY IN 1987



was armed with his mum's Kodak Brownie camera. After art college he mixed life as a graphic designer, magazine art director, photographer and part-time art college tutor with motocross and photo-journalism. Now he's a commentator, painting pictures with words. He never did get a proper job...

JACK BURNICLE is the godfather (our words, not his) of British MX Journalism. Born in Billingham, County Durham, to Bella and nutty (his words, not ours) musical genius Stan Burnicle, Jack was mad about cars and motor racing as a kid. At sweet 16 he got a motorbike, rode it to a local 'scramble' and was instantly, hopelessly hooked. Next time he went he



1989 AND AMERICAN TEENAGE SENSATION DAMON BRASHAW CELEBRATES VICTORY OVER BAYLE (right) + JEFF WARD?

DESCRIPTION SIGNALEMENT

Beater	Titulaire	★Wife	Femme
Occupation	GRAPHIC DESIGNER		
Profession			
Place of birth	BILLINGHAM		
Lieu de naissance			
Date of birth	9/3/47		
Year			

Jack Burnicle

Usual signature of beater

Signature du titulaire

Usual signature of wife



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The following year introduced a toothy French teenager called Jean-Michel Bayle and Johnson was dramatically revealed crouched in a vast, unfurling iron fist – a truly stunning item of engineering! 'RJ' was duly crowned King at last after winning two nights, though the crowd's new darling Bayle brought the roof down with his third place on the last day.

And so it went on, in a deafening cauldron of cleverly choreographed showbiz and blistering racing. Johnson and Jeff Ward descended from a blackened sky as silver spacemen in a spaceship before Ricky, a crazed Guy Cooper and Ron Lechien each won in 1988. Ward's monochrome consistency crowned him unlikely King but new world 125 champ Bayle had rapturously led a final for a long time before stalling his Honda!

Into 1989 and Aussie Jeff Leisk was ingeniously introduced emerging from a hole

in the ground wearing a miner's helmet and lamp. Johnson, in his swansong year, won again (riding number 13!) and shared the spoils with Leisk – first non-American winner of a Main Event – and lanky 19-year-old newcomer Larry Ward. A brief extension to four days in 1990 saw the amazing Bayle win three before falling to Jeff Stanton and a 125 class was introduced for the first time. JMB was crowned King again in 1991, though the first and second nights went to exciting new hero Damon Bradshaw and the enigmatic Larry Ward.

The 10th anniversary edition of 1992 invited back legends O'Mara, Johnson, Glover and Bailey, the latter overwhelmed by the crowd's reception. "I just never knew we meant so much to these guys when we were racing here," said a humbled David. In three mighty contests, Stanton came out on top of Bayle – two to one – but a tubby youngster called Jeremy McGrath entered the mix.

McGrath lit up 1993 to beat team-mate Stanton to the crown but a first night breakdown stopped him in 1994 when we televised one of the most thrilling live Bercy races ever on Eurosport. McGrath, Mike LaRocco and Doug Henry fought for second night honours in a truly epic encounter, prematurely red-flagged after Jimmy Button crashed. 'The Rock' became 'Roi de Bercy' but Jeremy bounced back in 1995.

Ryan Hughes, Jeff Emig and an elated Larry Ward would claim the crown over the next three years but Carmichael's ill-fated 1998 visit preluded a sharp decline in US interest leaving David Vuillemin to dominate into the new millennium.

Perhaps James Stewart's triumphant debut will spark a revival in Stateside interest among their top stars. And if they can brew up some actual opposition for Bubba then the Palais Omnisports might scale once more those stirring heights of bygone years.



BROC GLOVER WINS
YAMAHA'S FIRST
BERCY FINAL IN
DECEMBER, 1984!

RAISING THE ROOF!

OUR TECH ED JETS OFF TO NEVADA FOR A HEIFER-SIZED HELPING OF INDOOR INSANITY AT THE LAS VEGAS ENDUROCROSS

Words by Geoff Walker Photos by Jonty Edmunds



*Walker winds up his
Toomer in Vegas –
well, there's no show
without Punch!*



Indoor insanity! That's the simple way to describe the sport of endurocross. The first indoor enduro was 10 years ago in Spain and it's a branch of off-road riding that is becoming THE spectator motorsport for off-road fans. The excitement of this style of racing is unreal and there is action in abundance every second of every race over a super-technical mix of rocks, logs, mud, sand, water and tyres.

Legendary race promoter Eric Peronnard watched one of these races in Spain and was instantly hooked on the excitement. The man doesn't mess about and he instantly booked the awesome Orleans Arena in Las Vegas for the first 'EnduroCross' in 2004. The race was an amazing success and the American public were also hooked on the sheer spectacle and madness of this new motorsport.

Four years on and endurocross is pulling the crowds in all over America and is now a full-on AMA six-round series with the riders specialising in this form of intense racing. The riders are building their own private tracks to train on and the level is going through the roof. The blend of supercross, enduro and trials is a difficult trio of skills to master and is only achievable with hard work. If you are not prepared to take it indoors and give it 100 per cent on the track then stay at home or go to the stands, grab a beer and enjoy the show!

After my trip to Vegas last year for the EX I wanted to return with no injuries. The thought of riding around in the Orleans Arena with a broken hand in '07 didn't fill me with joy and I was pretty determined to get there and give it my all. I had actually managed to do a lot of training for this race as I knew the punishment levels were so high. Cycling with 661's Dalemungus and Paul Skinback as well as reeling off hundreds of laps of the Three Cross Demo EX track with Glenner, Stony Wayne and BK shouting at me was good fun and I hoped it would all be worth the effort in Vegas.

One of the biggest problems with racing out there is the mental power needed to get your head around the fact that you're in Las Vegas – Sin City – in the middle of the Nevada Desert and that you'll be going racing in front of a few thousand screaming fans! It really is insane – quite possibly the coolest thing on earth – and I feel like the luckiest rider on the planet to have a job that can send me to these places.

With the KTM 250 XC in place and being brought to Vegas courtesy of Kurt Nicoll and Antti Kallonen at KTM North America (thanks also to Shaun at KTM UK) and the suspension I've been running on the awesome '09 KTM 300 EXC split down and packed in my gear bag along with a set of Evoke

graphics, I had all the parts I needed to hopefully get off to a smooth start on an unfamiliar bike.

Unfortunately, I was taking on the race alone this year as Spode, Irish Stu, Jonny Bodacious and KP Equipe Keith were all busy boys. But a call to Jonty Edmunds confirmed he was heading out there so we could hold hands on take-off and landing and after 14 hours in the air and one plane change we were there!

The Orleans Arena and hotel is only 10 minutes in a taxi from the airport so in no time we were checked in. The first morning at the hotel and it was straight down to the gym after a crap night's sleep. Spin the legs out on the cycle and try to get rid of the travel stiffness was the order of the morning. Myself and Jonty went off to see if we could have a look at the course and as we walked into the arena the track crew headed by Eric Peronnard were absolutely flat-out making some unbelievable obstacles. It looked amazing and I really started to feel the pressure building.

The effort from Eric and his team is awesome and they landscape the track to perfection, all for one day's use. Bringing in dirt, rocks, logs, tyres, pouring concrete, tree planting etc etc – so much effort. The rigs and trucks were beginning to roll into the pit area and the atmosphere was building. The KTM big rig pulled into place and I knew my bike was in there. I wouldn't see it until the next day (race day) but after a chat to Antti and me old mates Julian 'D3' Stevens and Andrew 'uncle of GL' Langston I was assured there was a bike there for me. Phew.

I think I amused Jonty with my level of nerves as the race came closer and by the morning of race day I was pretty worn out with the tension of it all. The bike was awesome and pretty much ready to roll. I fitted my '09 forks and the KAIS bladder-kitted shock to the '08 XC and popped the graphics and #140s onto the bike. It's brilliant to be involved with the KTM crew as everyone is friendly and it's good to see old friends, Kurt 'Happy' Nicoll is one of these and he took an extreme amount of pleasure in ripping me to bits at every opportunity. I didn't mind as it seemed to take the pressure off knowing expectations weren't too high! Laugh.

The KTM crew were absolutely brilliant in the lead up to the event and with Kurt there to take the p**s out of me and team manager Antti on hand to help with any issues as well as the rest of the tech crew and some upper management around it really was the ultimate 'factory' experience. The whole day can easily turn into some kind of out of body experience as it's hard to believe the amount of people who come over for a chat and

Polish indoor and extreme enduro specialist Taddy Blazusiak





Motocross legend Mike Brown is one of the off-road heroes attracted by the glitz and glamour you get racing in Las Vegas



Geoff's race ends with an early bath

to offer help and encouragement as the build up to the track walk and practice approach.

Endurocross seems to attract some very cool fans and any who stopped by at the rig for a chat showed genuine interest and good will to the clearly terrified Paddy standing in front of them trying to get changed and organised for the impending carnage. I had a couple of offers of assistance from random race goers as I was there alone but I politely declined as if something goes wrong with bike or rider out there it's pretty much the end of your night's action as there's never too long between races during the programme. I just had to pray for no dramas during the show!

The track would run in one direction for the qualifying and class races on the Saturday morning before being reversed to the gnarlier track for the pre-qualified riders' qualifying laps and evening show. For me and the other pre-qualified riders it was a programme consisting of a track walk at three o'clock followed by two five-minute sessions of practice and finally one individual single lap of the track for qualifying. This single lap causes a lot of sleepless nights as they open the arena for free entry to the public to watch the pain and pressure of the 'hot lap' where things have a habit of getting just a little out of control! There are 36 riders in the evening show and the hot lap determines heat and gate position – as you can imagine this lap means a lot to every rider as this can mean the difference between qualifying for the Main or not. Good gate position is everything as the start is so important in Endurocross.

>>

*Kurt Caselli and
Wally Palmer go
bar-to-bar*



*"Oh no, he's coming
right at us!" Walker
does his best to take out
Boeing buddy Jonty...*



The track walk is superb – discussing lines with Mike Brown, having the craic with Geoff Aaron and generally standing in a daze thinking about getting on the start with the likes of Damon Huffman, Mika Ahola, Sebastian Tortelli, Destry Abbott, Ricky Dietrich and Taddy Blazusiak to name just a few of the best off-roaders in the world. Trying to keep the nerves in check at this point was hard work and I just wanted to get on the bike and get a few laps under my belt.

The track was heavily watered before we started the training sessions so there would be no dust later in the evening. This made for an interesting few laps for everyone. Frequent crashes were the early order and as I rode out onto the track for the first time I tried not to get too excited. There is no easy way to describe the feeling of riding onto the track in the company I was keeping – it is awesome, scary and super-exciting. But after a lap of the track that feeling is gone and it is all business, trying to source lines and check the bike for a good feeling as well as trying to keep the feet up and find a rhythm.

Intensity is an understatement and every couple of metres on the track there is something else trying to remove your ass from the bike. The big rock section was a real stopper for almost every rider at some point during the two short sessions and it seemed everyone was having the same arm pump issues. With the sessions complete and the hot lap just a few minutes away I tried to relax my arms and get some strength back – nerves and tension were killing me and I needed to have a word. At these times you miss your pals at the race...

I wasn't happy with the rear of the bike as it was sitting a little low and wasn't providing any help on the double double logs. I wound the spring up one complete turn on pre-load and backed the rebound out two turns to give the shock a bit more of an active feel. This would give me a better feel for the hot lap (I hoped). Every rider lined up and I was around 14th to have my shot at the lap. With three riders in the line before me and a

snarling Nate Kanney going next after me my arms decided to go into a full malfunction – I was rubbing them, talking to them and trying to calm them down.

Then the cameras were rolling on me and the officials waved me to start my run in for the lap. The tension eased as I rode out into the arena and the lap went quite smooth but was more of a lukewarm lap rather than the required hot lap. I was pretty pleased with it as I stayed smooth and on line for most of the time. My lungs nearly popped out of my chest but the worst part was over, I was going to the evening show and I was quietly happy with my 27th place in qualifying – not brilliant but not too bad for a slow old man from the Emerald Isle.

There was a weight lifted now the lap from hell was over and it was off to check the bike over and prepare goggles and drinks for the racing. A change of kit was needed as the No Fear crew had sent me out with express orders to wear both sets of kit and the white had to be saved for the main show! Very demanding!

The bike ran perfect and although it was a little more aggressive in its power delivery than I'm used to it got me round well so I wasn't going to change anything before the races. Jonty arrived out to the rig after the session had finished and seemed okay with my efforts. I managed to eat a banana and a couple of biscuits and hydrate myself before the start of the show. Sitting there in the pits beside the KTM and looking out across the Las Vegas strip with the lights shining and beaming into the sky it struck me just how lucky I am in life. I was about to go and race indoors in Vegas. Superb.

I was in the third of three heats and after the intros and post show interviews for the big screen and TV it was all of a sudden down to business. The event runs at an incredible speed and the fans are there to be entertained – that is the sole purpose and as I was there to race and race hard I wanted to get off to a good start and get into some battles for the crowd. It's probably the coolest sensation I've ever felt

>>



Kurt Nicoll (second left) seems pretty pleased with his 'factory' rider's performance...



Damon Huffman comes out on top in the Orleans Arena



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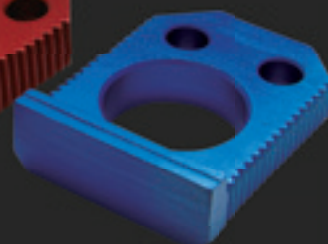


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sitting on gate nine of 10 waiting for the board girl to get the countdown going. Everything seemed to go into slow motion and I could see familiar faces staring and offering encouragement. I had goosebumps and I wanted to do well for myself and everyone who had helped me to get there.

The board went sideways and all hell cut loose. I pushed hard to the first corner and just when I thought it might open up for me as I was running the turn wide the #10 factory Kawasaki of Destry Abbott came into view without him on it! I got slammed and ended up on top of his bike while stuck under mine. Destry is a strong fella and he lifted his bike with my big ass on it. I was gutted and restarted from last – what I didn't realise at first was that the front disc had been bent so bad the wheel was having trouble turning. Every time I shut the gas off the bike would stop – the clutch was under a lot of pressure but I just wanted to push on and get to the finish.

The longest six laps of my life followed with more crashes than I have made in three trips to the Red Bull Romaniacs! But it was too far to come to pull out of any race, even with the front wheel locking up. To say I was disappointed after the heat was an understatement and with the show well and truly in full swing I knew there wasn't much time to try to fix the disc before the semi finals were upon me. Taddy's mechanic Julian was at the rig when I got back there and he tried to turn the front wheel while I held the bike. It was locked so it was out with the adjustable spanner and the straightening of the disc began. I was able to get it a bit better and then it was time to get back up to the holding area.

The disc was scrap but the semi was about to go. I was last to the line and pretty angry – and Angry Geoff is no good indoors! Up the inside from the second row and I got collected again, not quite as bad as in the heat race but enough to leave me at the back of the pack. What happened next could be described as the finest few minutes of my entire motorcycling life. I went from last to third and almost past me old mate Destry

for second place, all within half-a-lap. This was how it was supposed to be – all the training and riding laps in the rain were worth it as I felt like I belonged in the company I was in. For a couple of magic laps I held third and was keeping the pressure on the guys in front as mistakes happen – if I could stay in touch I could maybe somehow sneak a win and a transfer to the Main.

The KTM guys were cheering and Jonty and the Dirt Rider crew were getting excited. Hero to zero springs to mind as I got hooked up on the exit log from the big rocks – the front wheel was locking and unless I pushed at max speed it was slowing enough to make me hook up on the tops of the technical bits. I think one guy got by me the first time I hooked up and I was really pissed, the next lap and the same thing happened again!

But this time I decided that if I was going down in the semis I was going down fighting! I came off the log slightly behind the new fourth-placed man and as he started to cut across me to get into the 180 degree left-hander Angry Geoff surfaced and no way was I shutting the two-fiddy down. Whack! Down we went and it felt weirdly good to t-bone someone again – what a rush!

I had no idea where the guy was and who got up first but I wanted to get going. I got the now even more bent KTM up and rode the next couple of turns like a loony with some mad idea I could still advance. I hit the water section WFO and after thumping the second log and middle rocks I was flying over the bars and going for splash down! It was awesome! My race was done but I'd done my job and entertained the fans who seemed to like the fact I'd just taken a bath! I should have been pissed off and I was after but at the time I just had to soak it all up (literally) and enjoy the moment as the cheers went up – it was Las Vegas after all and over there it's all about the show.

As I rode past the finish line and out to the KTM rig I had a massive smile on my face. It made my day just after my exit when the mighty Kurt gave me a pat on the back and just for a second the piss taking stopped and I think he was just slightly impressed with his factory rider for a day.



Third on the night earns Ricky Dietrich the 2008 Arenacross title



Geoff Aaron gets on the second step of the Vegas podium

Total focus from Godfrey...



CHEERSM'DEARS

THANKS TO...

A massive thanks to everyone who made the trip possible – in no particular order... Kurt, Antti, Shaun and everyone at KTM, Sean, Sully, Marge and the DBR crew. Eric Peronnard. Karl @ Armadillo marketing and design. Matt, Dale and Big E @ 661. Phillip, Phillipe @ No Fear and Spy Europe. Glenner and the 3 Cross Demo crew. Keith and the KP Equipe crew. Mark, Paula and Stu @ ISO2 Nutrition. Uncle Dinham. Jonty. Jason @ Evoke Concepts. Steve @ TCX boots. CTi. Michelin USA. Jesse, Chris and the Dirt Rider crew. Black Jacks MCC. BK, H and TJ.

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*The future of motocross?
Quantya's electric dirt
bike could be the shape of
things to come...*

ELECTRIC SHOCK!

WITH QUANTYA'S REVOLUTIONARY ELECTRIC BIKE THE FUTURE OF MOTOCROSS MAY VERY WELL BE A GIANT STEP CLOSER – BUT HAS PRODUCING A SILENT, ODOURLESS DIRT SCOOT TAKEN THE FUN OUT OF OFF-ROAD RIDING?

Words by **Tony Marshall** Photos by **Sutty**



I think I've just seen the future of motocross and – whisper it – I'm not sure I like it. I've spent virtually my entire life racing MX bikes and for me the sport is all about the sounds and smells that only petrol engines can produce so turning laps on the Quantya electric dirt bike was a little, er, alien...

Even the most optimistic among us will admit that our sport is under threat – two-strokes are under threat for having too high emission levels, four-strokes are under threat for noise pollution. So a zero emission, zero noise electric bike has got to be the way forward. Think about it – you should be able to ride them anywhere without anyone moaning (although I bet someone still will). Technology is moving so fast and this is the result – the big question is are we ready for it yet?

Sitting on the Quantya didn't feel too bad. It's nice and slim and at 95kg about right for a modern dirt bike. I also suspect that the Swiss designers drew some inspiration from Husqvarna as the overall look reminds me of the Italian machines. The rear end did feel a bit high and this could be seen straightaway by just looking at it side on. Although at first glance it does look pretty much like a conventional dirt bike on closer inspection there are other bits and pieces you'd expect to see that are missing such as gear lever, brake pedal – and exhaust pipe.

Other than on a pit bike I've never ridden a motorbike with a hand operated rear brake before – it took me straight back to my BMX days. No clutch or gear lever was also going to be a bit strange but I guess with this electric bike a lot of things were going to be a bit strange.

When pulling away for the first time the Quantya felt a bit juddery although to be fair this only happened when I tried to lay the power down slowly from quarter to half-throttle – not bad but not smooth. But it really didn't feel right without any noise – all I could hear was the wind, the click of Sully's camera and lots of laughter when I got out of shape and buried it in a turn.

I try to be open-minded going into tests but it was hard not to be a bit dismissive beforehand – I mean, it's a bloody battery-powered bike. How is it ever going to live up to the tried and tested internal combustion engine? Hal So I was really surprised at just how good the electric motor was out of turns. I never felt the judder on the track – just a smooth pull right from the stop and if you put a bit of weight on the rear the front wanted to lift. Pretty pokey!

With the rear brake on the handlebars I felt more balanced round the turns and this was a real – and unexpected – bonus on right-handers as you can give it the odd dab of rear halfway through the turn if needed. This I really liked! I also felt it helped through left-hand corners as well – like I said, it just felt a bit more balanced. The rear brake could have done with being a bit sharper but I'm sure with a bit of adjustment this could have been achieved. It surprised me at just how quickly I adapted to the bar-mounted rear brake and in fact the only time it caught me out was when I automatically dabbed for it with my right foot over a jump to correct the bike's landing angle but I quickly got my head around that.

The front end of this bike is all wrong for MX. It looks like it has a big-wheel 85 front end – forks and wheel – which is why the Quantya sits low on the front. Most bikes run a front wheel between two to three inches bigger than the rear but this just runs at one inch bigger. This bike started its life aimed at street use but I'm still not sure where they are coming from with the front end. Maybe they were trying to keep the weight down? Whatever their reasoning, this makes the bike feel a bit unstable around and into the turns.

As I said before, the power the Quantya was laying down out of the turns was really unexpected with good traction and a nice pull but then there wasn't much mid-range and even less top-end. I reckon if the track was rough this bike would struggle a bit more but, thankfully, the conditions I rode in were dry and dusty. When I tested the Quantya the gearing was wrong for MX – basically it was geared too low. With the front sprocket we had for the test top speed was about 30mph which you could hit in a matter of seconds but I was assured a bigger sprocket would push that up to around the 50mph mark.

On a tight track with the test gearing the Quantya would take some beating but on a big outdoor track it would be out of its depth. But you've got to remember that this is something very different and at the moment the Quantya is still in a fairly early stage of development and they are making progress on a monthly basis.

The Sachs rear shock made a harsh noise landing off the jumps but not in compression as this felt soft – occasionally it felt as though it was metal hitting metal – but with the electric motor you hear everything so this also made it feel worse. As I said before, the rear felt high but it was actually the front being too low. And while there was no headshake on the front end in general everything felt a little bit soft. The Marzocchi forks and shock could certainly do with a bit of beefing up.

The thing that's holding an electric bike back is obviously the battery. This is not so much of a problem with a car as there's more space for bigger and more powerful batteries but with a bike there really isn't the room. But battery technology is moving forward and as they become more developed the Quantya will continue to improve.

Our test at FatCat Motoparc came to a premature end when some crud caused the exposed primary drive belt to snap and for me this sort of sums up the Quantya. I bet it's perfect for bombing around cities on but taking it onto the dirt is a different matter and more development is needed if it's to realise its full potential off-road.



The lack of noise makes riding the Quantya an eerie experience



For exclusive video footage of our test
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ELECTRIC TRICKERY

THE FUTURE OF OUR SPORT?

There was a time when electric-powered forms of transport either only arrived in the early hours of the morning with crates of milk in the back or were piloted erratically by cotton tops and came complete with tartan panniers and built-in leg blankets. Well not any more!

All the major car manufacturers are developing electric-powered vehicles, KTM have made no secret of their electric motorcycle project and with their Track and Strada models Swiss company Quantya are right at the cutting edge of development.

The off-road specific Track model boasts a top speed approaching 50mph, disc brakes, 40mm USD Marzocchi Shiver forks and a Sachs rear shock. Weighing in at 95kg, a wheelbase of 1310mm and seat height of 915mm bring it into line with conventional dirt bike specifications.

The 48v battery has a run time of between 30 minutes and two hours depending on how much throttle abuse goes on and Quantya claim a total 100 per cent charge time of around two hours. With a price tag of over £7,000 the Track isn't likely to become a best-seller but the beauty of new forms of technology is that the cost tends to start high and then falls – think how much your 42in plasma TV would have cost you a few years ago...



More development is needed to make the electric bike competitive in the dirt but the early signs are promising



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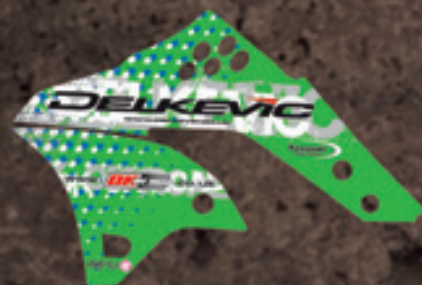
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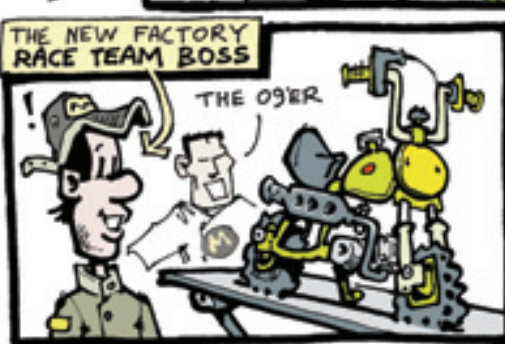
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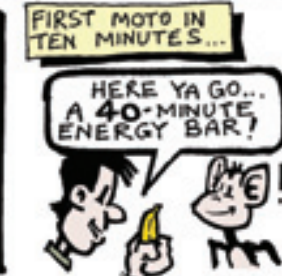
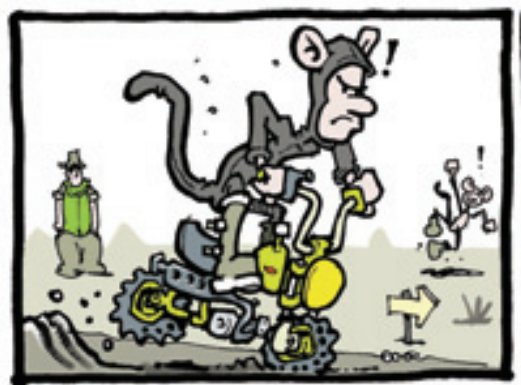
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EVOLUTION SX!

WITH A DOMESTIC SERIES THAT WAS DYING A DEATH, DRASTIC ACTION WAS NEEDED TO BREATHE LIFE BACK INTO THE AUSSIE SX SCENE. STEP FORWARD CHAD REED AND CRUSTY DEMONS MASTERMIND MIKE PORRA WITH A BLUEPRINT THAT JUST MIGHT BE ROLLED OUT ACROSS THE WORLD...

Words and photos by **Matt Muir**

Evolution – it's a word we commonly hear in motocross. From the factories describing their latest technological advancement down to racers talking about new riding techniques, 'evolution' is an industry buzzword.

But one thing that doesn't seem to evolve much in motocross and supercross is the sport itself. If it ain't broke don't fix it I hear you say. Well in Australia for the last few years supercross has been breaking and a fix was most certainly needed.

The Australian national supercross series has been running for a good few years now and was promoted for seven of 'em by Spokes Promotions up until the end of 2006. Before the start of the 2007 season the national controlling body for motorcycling failed to negotiate a contract with Spokes and at one point it seemed there would be no supercross series for '07. Then, at the last minute, FTS Promotions stepped in and did what they could but it seemed as though supercross was headed for an unfortunate end.

At the same time as Australian SX was in freefall, on the other side of the world Australia's most talented supercross graduate was climbing up the AMA ranks. Chad Reed's '04 and '08 AMA SX titles did not go unnoticed in his home country and his achievements have helped to gradually bring more mainstream interest and support as well as more active participation to the sport. Add to this the fact he has helped blaze the trail for other Aussie hopefuls now racing overseas and it makes you wonder why the sport as a whole was in a decline in Oz.

Chad was aware of what was going on and he wanted to help give back to a sport and country that had given him so much – but how? Enter Mike Porra, CEO of Global Action Sports. Promoter of the Crusty Demons live shows worldwide for the last five years, Mike was approached by the governing body of Aussie SX to try and bring success to racing. Initially Mike was reluctant to become involved – he knew dirt bikes were popular but what he was unsure of was the entertainment package that racing could provide. Mike felt that the format of heats and a 20-lap final were not going to bring the sport into the mainstream which was essential for success. So for him to become involved and for the sport to progress it needed to evolve.

The idea of change didn't sit all too well with some in the sport. The purists didn't agree with Mike wanting to create a new formula of racing. But faced with the prospect of another ill-fated season they were persuaded to keep an open mind and give him a go. Mike and Chad came together for a meeting and formed a business partnership but this was just the start of the hard work.

>>



*The all-time king of supercross
Jeremy McGrath adds some
showbiz to the last few rounds*



*It's hardly a shock that
Chad Reed dominates
Down Under*

The first issue was dates. The decision to hold the series late in the year from October through to December was made because this is most riders' off-season around the world. By creating a credible, well-supported and competitive series Mike and Chad hoped to entice international riders to race for the championship, further boosting their experience and credentials abroad.

Live television in a primetime slot was also seen as a crucial factor for success. There aren't many other sports as spectacular to watch as supercross – but to keep people watching Mike wanted it to become a show, not just a race. Sure, watching someone like Chad race is a great sight but not enough and that's where the biggest change to this new breed of racing came in.

As mentioned earlier Mike was not a huge fan of the standard 20-lap race format. With the series running over seven rounds in seven cities throughout Australia, a total of six different race formats were used ranging from the traditional 20-lap final at two rounds to super sprint, triple challenge, survival, man-on-man and quadruple sprint. Some were found to be more appealing to the riders and fans than others but overall the changes were well received.

One of the advantages with the formats is that they provided closer racing than usual. For example, with the quadruple sprint format it was a series of four five-lap races with two minutes break in between. So in 20 laps there were four starts and the riders were always grouped back together to try and prevent someone like Chad getting the lead and checking out. At times some were vocal in their opinion that it wasn't true racing but it can't be denied that it was a different, exciting way to see supercross.

Another important factor was the track size and design. In the past Australian supercross races have been held in very small indoor arenas like basketball courts and were much the same size as most European indoor events. But this time all venues were large areas such as football fields with the guys utilising as much of the ground as possible. Mark 'Bomber' Barnett, the AMA supercross track builder, was flown in and created an extremely exciting and challenging environment for both the riders and fans with lap times on average only 10 seconds shorter than in the US.

So with the race formats, television and tracks in place what else was needed? Well try an Australian FMX championship plus a top 10 shootout before the finals pitting the fastest lap setters from both the 450cc and 250cc class against each other in a one-lap dash to be the fastest.

Another great idea was the Super X VIPs pass which gave holders a catered meal, access to the pits and the best seats in the house. And in addition to this the average 15-20,000 spectators at each round were greeted to a traders' row, promo girls handing out goodies and the manufacturers welcoming the fans with open arms. All this helped to really create a buzz and atmosphere not seen outside of the US.

So what happened in the racing? Well, as predicted Makita Rockstar Suzuki's Chad Reed dominated almost every time he went out on the track to easily take the championship with a comfortable points lead. Riding his factory RMZ450, the speed and style of the guy has to be seen to be believed!

But there were still some guys putting up a fight – especially with the varied race formats – including '07 Oz SX champ and now US-based Geico Powersports Honda rider Dan Reardon. Dan made the trip back home and at times challenged Reed early in the series until a shoulder injury slowed him. Another rider worth mentioning and the only rider to stand on the top step of the podium besides Reed was Rockstar Yamaha's Jay Marmont. He hounded Reed throughout the series and looked solid, finally beating him in the penultimate round's man-on-man format.

One other illustrious competitor came down from the States for the last two rounds to play as well. The all-time king of supercross Jeremy McGrath looked his usual smooth and stylish self. Still a competitive top five racer, McGrath is in negotiations to compete down under for the whole series next year.

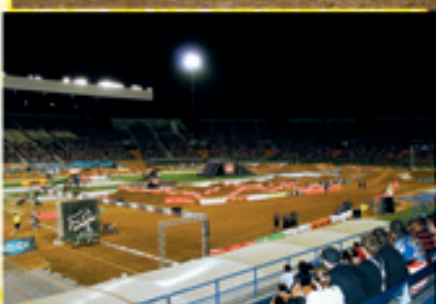
The 250cc support class was always an exciting affair with US-based Star Racing Yamaha rider Jake Moss doing the honours in the first couple of rounds. Unfortunately, a back injury while practising put him out for the rest of the season leaving it to his brother to take over. The Shift Motul Suzuki-mounted Matt Moss dominated all but one of the remaining races, sewing up the championship with a round left to spare. This turned out to be a huge blessing as at the final round Matt came down hard in the long set of whoops and DNF'd the night.

So with the first new season over and done with supercross in Australia is finally getting that race tune it so desperately needed. There are plans for an even larger series next year and international races are in the works. It seems that with the level of thought and effort being put in by some forward thinking people an idea like this could work not just in Australia but anywhere overseas.

The evolution of supercross in Australia – and quite possibly the world – has begun...



Ralph's hot...



Jay Marmont's the only rider to beat Speedy Reedy all series



Almost six years after his 'retirement' MC is still as popular as ever with SX audiences



Major venues give track builder Mark Barnett room to get creative

After his brother Jake crashes out
Matt Moss goes on to dominate
the 250cc support class



FIVE MINUTES WITH...

MIKE PORRA >>

DBR: Can you tell us a bit about yourself and how you became involved in promoting the new SX series?

MP: "I've been involved in sports promotion for the last 10 years and for the last five years I have been the worldwide promoter for the Crusty Demons shows. During this time I was approached about promoting supercross and not just freestyle. After looking at it for some time I decided to give it a go."

DBR: How long has the series taken to get up and running?

MP: "I looked at it for some time and wasn't entirely enthused about getting involved. It took some time for me to convince the industry that a drastic change was needed. Once I had their support then it was time to go and that whole process took a couple of years to put together."

DBR: What was your reasoning behind the unusual race formats at some rounds?

MP: "I went through a lot of frustrating times trying to implement these formats but they were needed to provide a better entertainment package. Our research and feedback has shown them to be quite successful not only within the live audience but the television audience. We wanted to provide good close racing and have people coming away with a supercross experience unlike any other they have ever had."

DBR: Did you follow the Americans in any way as far as how you have presented and run your series?

MP: "Well I went to the US and watched a couple of the big AMA races and to be honest I wasn't that overly impressed. Some of that comes from my experience with the Crusty shows where we turned FMX into somewhat of a theatrical show. But I saw two races where more or less after the first turn the lead stayed constant with no particularly great entertainment in the lead up to it."

"So really apart from learning about racing there wasn't too much I gained from it. Except for really coming home feeling very confident that in this country we could lead from here, try new things and basically create a whole new sport called Super X."

DBR: How important do you feel it has been to have live TV coverage?

MP: "Well having live TV is very stressful. Especially when you are also trying to run an event for 20,000 people at the same time. But we felt it important because with these new formats we really needed to get it out there and show people the sport and live TV was the thing to do that. Plus I don't think there is a more spectacular form of competition around. My pick is that in the next four to five years this is going to be a big mainstream sport on television."

DBR: How has the series been received by the participants and the general public?

MP: "The riders have been fantastic. As you would expect there are some of them that would prefer the straight 20-lap format, Chad being one of them. And I can completely understand him being a world champion in the 20-lap format why he prefers it. But from a business perspective and with him as my business partner he knows it's the right thing from a business point of view."

"Most of the other riders really enjoy it. One of the main reasons being that they have never experienced racing in such an electric atmosphere. The crowds have never cheered louder and the whole place is buzzing and they can't help but get caught up in the incredible excitement of it all. From a TV and crowd point of view we have had amazing feedback and there is no question it is certainly appealing to the audience."

DBR: Do you think this sort of SX concept could work in the UK and Europe?

MP: "Without a doubt. Super X as we call it really stands for a type of racing which is the new formats. And I think to be honest if it's not us someone will copy what we are doing and these formats will be happening in Europe and America in the next couple of years."

"It may be us or someone else but there is no question about it in my mind. This footage is being broadcast around the world and all promoters will be seeing it, everyone knows what we are doing here. In my mind it's not a question of if, it's when."





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FIVE MINUTES WITH...

CHAD REED >>

DBR: What were your reasons behind becoming involved in this series?

CR: "I'm just trying to help put Australia back on the map for supercross as it's been slowly going downhill for some time. I competed in a race last year in my hometown of Newcastle and it opened my eyes as to how much people over here love watching us and what we do."

"But the problem was that nobody was out there trying to help. It seemed to all happen at once though with myself and Mike meeting up and working something out that we can both be proud to be involved with."

DBR: Do you feel a series like this can be successful in the UK and Europe?

CR: "Well what makes it easy for us here is that the US supercross season runs January through May and every motocross series runs May through September be it US, world or even Australian. So it's real difficult to fit anything in that time but we are blessed with living south of the equator and it's summer time here."

"I don't think it would be possible to go to Europe and race a real series like this due to weather conditions at this time of year. But it's still yes and no, I mean the French have a great series with a lot of fun off-season races. Bercy for example is amazing – I love that race. But more so I think this Australian series could be a huge stepping stone for a lot of European riders. Guys like Cairoli are hugely talented riders but I think they should be here trying to learn the ropes."

"We have the same tracks, the riders here are competitive but not quite at the US level so it's like I said, a great stepping stone. When I was 18 and left Australia I progressed to Europe before the US and took it step by step. But I think for the European riders to go straight from home to the US is hard. The Americans are great at supercross and the Europeans really lack that experience. So I welcome them here, I really think this is a good series for them."

DBR: How do you think the race formats have worked out?

CR: "To be honest I have a love/hate relationship with them. Some of the sprint formats with, say, five-lap races are intense. You get a bad start and really have to work hard and fast to get up there and it's real entertaining. As for things like the man-on-man format, I hated it. I mean two riders, two laps. That's not racing – it's 100 per cent entertainment and zero racing which I disagree with."

DBR: How do the tracks compare to the US?

CR: "The tracks have been good, they are a lot of fun. They have averaged about 10 seconds shorter but other than that they are doing really well. To be in Australia and to see tracks like this with the standard and presentation – we have come a long way even in comparison to what we had a year ago."

DBR: Have you found these races may help you in preparing for the upcoming AMA series?

CR: "I think so, I really feel that my riding is coming around. I really feel on top of it. Each week I feel good and with the series schedule and race format it has really helped keep my intensity up there. So although I haven't enjoyed some of the shorter formats it's been a real good workout and good for my racing. I get to do a lot of starts and, yes, overall it has definitely been good practice for the American series."



THE PARENT TRAP!

IN THE HIGH PRESSURE WORLD OF SCHOOLBOY SPORT, POOR PARENTING CAN HAVE FAR-REACHING CONSEQUENCES...

Words by Neil Drew

Standing outside the Dirt Bike Show drinking a cup of coffee and quietly people-watching as I often do, I saw a young man who I'd worked with earlier in the year who had put to very good use what he'd learned from me by posting his best ever results in competition. Yet when I went over to see him I could sense he seemed troubled.

He told me how he now found himself in the complex situation of a parent causing him emotional difficulties. The situation could jeopardize his place in a team he had recently signed for because of his father's need to be recognized for his role in the son's career.

His story is one that I hear from time to time of emotional blackmail and disguised threats of sanctions that have much deeper consequences than you would ever imagine. To understand how these acts of control, manipulation, angry frowns and punishment have such a huge impact long after our children have left home and made their own lives is as always a very complex subject that we will attempt to simplify in these two pages.

Until a child gets a job, leaves home and becomes independent they rely totally on their parents for stability, a roof over their heads, food on the table, guidance in times of difficulty, protection and – especially where sport is concerned – finance. The child is essentially trapped and at the mercy of the whims and attitudes of the parents, good or bad. Fortunately, most are good and positively encouraging – however, there are those that are less healthy.

Let us examine a typical dysfunctional parent/child relationship where the child's desires are used against him/her by a parent with ulterior motives and results in a game in which there aren't any winners and both parents and child end up unhappy.

There are three distinct roles played by the parent on the defenceless child. One is the game of 'I am in charge, do as I say or else' – we'll call this the

'punisher role'. The second is 'see, I told you so, you won't listen to me' (also falling into this category is 'it's cost me so much money and...') – we'll call this one the 'wounded role'. The third goes along the lines of 'because you are upset let me do something to make it right' – we'll call this one the 'saviour role'. Of course, the variants on the statements shown are infinite but the principle remains the same.

The roles of 'punisher', 'wounded' and 'saviour' become a way of life with the parent switching between roles depending upon how the child responds. Let's say the child wants a new bike and the parent can afford it but that the relationship is a dysfunctional one. The parent will most likely play the role of saviour and purchase the bike but at a deep unconscious level use it as leverage at some later point with the child and say something like "I got you all that equipment and you won't do X,Y or Z". What the parent is doing is essentially attempting to get the child to feel guilt by switching roles from the saviour to the punisher – if the child becomes deeply upset the parent may well switch back to that of saviour.

Another typical example is where the child is told they have to do well in a particular event with some sort of punishment levered against the child to do what's been instructed. So the role being adopted by the parent is that of punisher. The child comes back in after failing and the parent switches role to wounded party by sulking, only to switch back later to the punisher because the child is keeping quiet or has responded to the parent's need to switch roles without realising they've been set up.

Before we take this further and look at the consequences there is an important fact to understand. All children at a deep unconscious level need their parents for their own personal survival so their parents are the most important people to please. Another important fact to understand is that the child will learn different strategies for getting the parents' attention. A great example is where a young child interrupts during a phone call and gets told off for this interruption. The child has just learnt at an unconscious level how to get attention and you will see patterns of this all the time, including when they compete.

As a result of the child's need for security and to please mum and dad at all costs they are likely to develop all manner of problems as a result. Children on the whole will live in fear of upsetting the parent, fear of not having their needs met, fear of failing, fear of being rejected, fear of ridicule and so on. Because of this the child will develop coping mechanisms which sometimes will include deceit in order to avoid sanctions or sometimes they will just get so nervous that it becomes nearly impossible for them to compete at their best. The paradox is that this in itself gives the parent the excuse to yet again go into the 'punisher' mode and so the cycle continues.

Now let's look at some of the long-term effects of these dysfunctional relationships. A child that lives in fear as we just described is most likely going to end up passive because of their fear of doing anything that could get them into trouble – better to do nothing than risk sanctions. A child that has had to learn to deceive will live with guilt – they may well grow to be envious and full of resentment and also have difficulty in dealing with power and authority.

This particular article is based on known psychological facts and personal experience and knowledge I have gained by working with many children on a therapeutic level to solve their behavioural and confidence problems. It doesn't in any way suggest that everyone who has a child in competition is this way, it has been written as an educational tool because if we are able to spot our own weaknesses then we are able to improve our relationships with our children. This way we can allow them to grow with confidence into adults who can make healthy decisions for themselves and can enjoy and excel in their childhood.

On the whole every parent only wants what's best for their child – it's just that some go about it the wrong way without any understanding of what is really going on the child's mind. In a previous article I talked about how when children become adults they have a very high chance of behaving in the same way with their children, all of which is completely avoidable if we are more aware of how we ourselves behave as adults with our children.



James Stewart flies in Fox at Bercy during his final appearance for the clothing brand



HEADLINEACT!

A SUPERCROSS SERIES-ENDING KNEE OP, AN UNBEATEN AMA NATIONAL SEASON, VICTORY IN THE US OPEN, SWITCHES FROM KAWASAKI TO YAMAHA AND FROM FOX TO ANSWER – JAMES STEWART HAS BEEN HOGGING THE HEADLINES IN '08...



© Sarah Gutierrez

Steve Cox is an American moto-journalist who follows the entire AMA SXMX tour. Since moving on from US weekly Cycle News he's struck out on his own to do the freelance thing and recently became one of

Racer X's editors at large. He knows the sport and its personalities like few others and as our US Editor provides insight straight from the Stateside scene..

STATESIDE

Stewart's new steed is unveiled
before the US Open in Las Vegas





James Stewart has been exclusively on Kawasakis since he was racing 60cc bikes 15 years ago and has been wearing Fox gear just as long. For 2009 both of those relationships are over as Stewart is already on Yamahas for the L&M Racing team – filling a spot vacated by rival Chad Reed – and he will be wearing Answer gear, Alpinestars boots and Bell helmets come January 1.

But you know what they say – the more things change, the more they stay the same. Even though that saying doesn't make a whole lot of sense it seems to apply here as, despite all of the changes, James Stewart is still the same rider he has always been – he's flashy, fast and seems unbeatable as he showed at the US Open.

DBR: You obviously achieved a huge goal this outdoor season – not just in winning the title but in completing a perfect season. Try and take us through the sort of emotions you experienced from beginning to end – starting from when your knee op meant you weren't even a definite for the opening round...

JS: "Basically, when I first showed up to Glen Helen I was stoked to even be riding. I had about three weeks riding the motorcycle and we got to Glen Helen and it was like 'all right, let's just see where we're at'. I didn't really know how my endurance would be – I felt good at the house but obviously racing is different. And it was good and I ended up winning Glen Helen. I was stoked to get one right away but at the same time I was trying to be realistic and I was thinking 'maybe it's because it was cool weather and the track wasn't that rough'. But then I went to Sacramento and I won and from there it just kept going.

"After [Mike] Alessi got hurt after that were Unadilla and Washougal. Once I got past those tracks I was like 'okay, I'm going to go ahead and try to wrap this championship up' which I did at Millville. Next thing you know there were two races left and at the last race it was pretty nerve-wracking. In a lot of ways it was one of the easiest seasons I've ever had. I was just kind of in a zone and everything was clicking. Everything just sort of fell into place."

DBR: In past years – especially outdoors – it almost seemed like you didn't have control over your own racing environment. Things would just seem to happen to you all the time. But this year things seemed much more calm and controlled around you and it showed both on and off the track. What was the change?

JS: "I think my growing up started in '06. You know, just getting a little bit older, everything's always a new beginning until something goes wrong and then it's back to the same old thing. It started in '06 and then obviously in '07, winning the championship, I thought I grew out of that stage and stopped crashing and stuff. That didn't go over well... Then I ended up hurting my knee.

"I think things changed because of two reasons – I think it was Aldon [Baker] training me and knowing coming to the gate that I'm 100 per cent ready to race, fitnesswise. I always know I'm able to handle anything that is thrown at me. And the other part was being hurt. I kind of took that time and realized that this is what I wanted to do and stuff. I'm still young. I'm only 22 so I feel like I still have a lot of time in me. I just feel like this year that I raced them all where nothing really bothered me. I didn't care what else was going on out on the track or who was doing what. That really helped and kept me in my own little zone and I've been good."

DBR: It seemed like it carried over into your life off the track, too. It seems like everything off the track is more calm and controlled...

JS: "It is and I think, obviously, I've grown up... And winning helps [laughs]. Winning helps a lot. It helps everything go a lot smoother. Again, like I said, I just really enjoyed coming back and being around everybody. I almost spent a whole year away from racing. I got hurt in July, then I raced twice between then and Glen Helen in May [Anaheim I and Phoenix]. That was a lot of time to think. Even though I was training and riding at some point in there, I still wasn't at the races and I figured out I could sit back and say I didn't care what people said about me but that I would treat people like I want to be treated. That's what I tried to do."

DBR: Obviously, we saw you at the US Open on a new bike with a new team but the end result seemed like the same James Stewart. Can you talk us through that a little bit?

JS: "It's cool to hear that. I heard people say that and stuff, that it doesn't look any different – but I did feel a difference. I definitely felt like I wasn't completely dialled in yet and obviously we went back and tested some more and it's a lot better now. But it was cool to just know that I could still do it. Every time that you make a big change like that, you always question yourself.

"Obviously, I knew the bike was good – they just won the Supercross championship – and I know Larry Brooks from the times we hung out and he's a really good guy and he really wants to win. It was good. To come out and win that race was pretty awesome and to have Chad [Reed] throw it away was like a little gift. I didn't have to do anything weird and end up having to listen to him be all mad at me before Anaheim. It was good. I'm glad we won. I didn't expect it but I'm glad we did."

DBR: There was that triple-triple on the second night that you were the only guy doing and you could tell it made a big difference timewise. How much different would that race have been if Chad was doing it or if you weren't?

JS: "I did another interview and I kind of said the same thing which is basically this – it's not my fault he didn't jump it. If he wanted to go around the track faster he should've jumped it. Obviously, I would've had to push somewhere else but I felt like maybe I wouldn't have caught him as quickly but I believe that I would've caught him. We'll never know but we ride around the same track and he didn't jump it and I did. That was pretty much the end of the story with that."

DBR: It's kind of weird that you were doing it presumably the harder way, yet he ended up crashing in the same section doing it the slower way.

JS: "To be honest I felt like it was easier doing it my way. I didn't like doubling and then trying to gas it and go up this big face of a triple so I was just going to jump up to the middle and then jump out. To me it was easier going my way but it takes a lot of balls to seat-bounce that thing out of the corner like that. I was able to do it and it was good."

DBR: The end of the triple-triple you were landing clean into the turn whereas the other line that Reed and everyone else were taking was a double-triple-single so they were jumping a single jump into the turn which seemed to slow them down a lot...

JS: "It was faster at the end, yeah. It wasn't necessarily faster in the beginning because I had to slow down so much to get the corner right that it sort of evened out. I had to slow down and set up while he would just go in on the gas and double-triple. At the end with him singling into the turn and then me tripling in and being able to arc that corner a little bit better, I think that's where the time was gained. At the end of the day I know I still have to prepare and be ready for Anaheim and that's a long ways out. That race was a cool race but it doesn't really mean anything."

DBR: Can you talk us through the details of how the deal came about with L&M Racing? How did this all come down and why was the change made?

JS: "We talked but it was all pending on Kawasaki. I was thinking about making a change. I thought about making a change a few years ago and then Kawasaki wanted me to stay so I was like 'all right'. It was an easy decision.

"Larry Brooks and I briefly started talking toward the end of the supercross season and I told him I was definitely interested. Then it kind of went farther and farther and then I think he offered Chad a contract and Chad turned it down.

"Then I came in and I was like 'all right, I like your deal'. In the meantime I didn't have anything going from Kawasaki at all so I figured that was my answer on that. I ended up going with the deal and it was cool. I'm stoked on the deal and obviously I kind of knew it was a supercross-only deal but it was one of those things where I could either sign the deal or retire from racing so I didn't want to do that [laughs]!"

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DBR: So then you had the whole summer racing for a team that you knew you weren't going to be with the following year. That must have made for some mixed emotions for you – going for a perfect season yet knowing that at the end of the season you were moving on.

JS: "The thing was I was happy. At the end of the day I think it was a blessing in disguise the way it went but it was weird for me. I knew it wasn't the team [at Kawasaki]. I knew it wasn't the few guys on the team, like Rick Asch and my mechanic Mike and stuff like that. They wanted me to stay.

"But then it was just kind of weird because I would go to the races and know I was leaving and no-one would say a word. Nobody called me. I knew I was going to walk out the door and no-one was going to say anything. That was weird. I felt like I still stayed cool and did my deal and won. I had a good time with the team. There were a couple of incidents that went on that kind of bummed me out so I was over it by the end of the season but it's all good now."

DBR: It's always strange to hear about teams and riders not getting along, especially when the reality is that you couldn't have fulfilled your contract much better and at the end of your contract you have done your duty and they have done theirs.

JS: "I went to bed at night knowing that I did everything I could. I didn't do anything wrong. We won the outdoor title and I made Kawasaki look good going 24-0 and me and Timmy [Ferry] went 1-2. I felt like I did everything to the best of my ability. I have a lot of respect for everyone on the team and everybody around it and Kawasaki itself, as a company, was good. I just think it was kind of sad to leave on that note. I wish I would've left a little bit better but, oh well... It was definitely a good ride and it was a fun ride."

DBR: And now the new chapter starts – James Stewart on a Yamaha wearing Answer gear... It's almost like a different guy!

JS: "I definitely look completely different. It's funny, my last race [Bercy] with Fox is next weekend and they're shipping my gear to my house and I have to carry it over. It's kind of weird that I have to end on that note, too. I'm like 'c'mon!'. But it's been a good ride with Kawasaki, Fox... It's definitely been fun and I've had a lot of good times. I've just got to move on. I think there are a lot

of good things coming with Answer and Bell and Alpinestars. It's a new beginning. You know me, when I make a change I make a big change. I just come in, clean house, fire everybody and I'm like 'get 'em out!' [laughs]."

DBR: Everybody out!

JS: "Yeah! It's all good, though. It's weird, though. But with Fox, I joke around with people but they fired me. Why would they be upset at me?"

DBR: Yeah, that is the interview that went out, that they didn't renew your contract because you were racing supercross-only and they didn't think that was right for the sport.

JS: "They did the story that they fired me and now they're pissed off at me so I don't understand [laughs]."

DBR: So what are your goals for 2009? You want to get your Supercross title back but what about everything else? Are you just going to concentrate on bringing more exposure to James Stewart at races like the X Games?

JS: "I guess there are two ways to look at it. If you look at it from that angle, it does look like it's about spreading my name out there and doing that stuff but in reality the L&M team is a supercross-only team. I didn't have another choice. We weren't doing outdoors. We might still do them but I knew getting into the situation that even though I wanted to race them, I figured if I wasn't going to race the outdoors I might as well do something I want to do.

"At the end of the day, if I wanted to, I could race supercross and go home. I could just go home and sit around until the US Open. Obviously, that's what Chad did the last couple of years once he started doing supercross-only. I just felt like to be able to do the X Games – which I could never do before – and then maybe go and race some GP stuff, I'm just trying to go have fun at events. If I can't race a full season then I might as well go do stuff where, if I was doing the Nationals, it would be hard to do these other things, too.

"At the end of the day I feel like I'm one of the biggest names in the sport and if we're doing X Games and other events, they're going to pump it up and people are going to tune in to supercross and motocross and try to figure out why people like me got all of this TV time."



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RISKY BUSINESS!

IT TAKES A SPECIAL KIND OF PERSON TO WIN AN AMA SX – SOMEONE WHO CAN THINK CLEARLY WHILE PUTTING THEIR HAIRY BOYS ON THE LINE...

Words by STEVE MATTHES Photo by SARAH GUTIERREZ

So it begins! The 2009 AMA Supercross series is right around the corner and, once again, optimism runs wild. This is the year that so and so rider takes the leap from top 10 to top five and a guy goes from top five to top three or even (gasp!) winning. Never mind that in the last 10 years if your name is not Jeremy McGrath, Ricky Carmichael, Chad Reed or James Stewart chances are you haven't won a supercross ever.

The fact is that in the 161 supercross races that have taken place since 1998, only eight riders (Kevin Windham, Mike LaRocco, John Dowd, Ezra Lusk, Nathan Ramsey, Sebastien Tortelli, David Vuillemin and Larry Ward) have won a race other than the aforementioned four. And three of those riders can only claim a single victory at that (Dowd, Ramsey and Tortelli).

It's tough to win right now and I'd bet that you would be hard pressed to find anyone who would lay their hard earned cash on anyone winning other than Reed or Stewart in 2009. There might be a chance that wunderkid Ryan Villopoto squeezes a victory out along the line but the chances of RV getting used to a new bike and the new competition fast enough to have him standing on the top step this year are pretty slim. No-one knows how his adjustment period will go but if you look into the history books at some other impressive riders you'll see that MC and Reed adapted quickly, Stewart was so so and RC struggled. There's nothing solid to indicate how the multi-time 250F champ will do.

If you go to the test tracks during the week and watch one of the contenders ride you can see that Andrew Short, Ivan Tedesco and Timmy Ferry have the incredible skill and nerve that it takes to win a supercross. Their speed is not a problem, their skills are not in question and their equipment is not an issue so what exactly is it that makes one or two guys capable of winning each and every week?

I think it starts with the commitment that each rider makes with himself in the morning when they wake up. Supercross does not suffer fools – it is a very taxing sport that pushes man and machine to the limits and just to make it a little more foolhardy it's incredibly dangerous. To be the best on Saturday

means that you must push yourself the other six days a week. The improvements are measured in tenths of seconds, the difference between those tenths is clipping a back wheel on the downside of a jump or not. When you watch any of these athletes during the week practice you can see that they can all clear the obstacles and skim the whoops. The real improvements come from being aggressive in between the jumps and in the corners – the best just push through the sections, they can't wait to hit the turn and attack the next obstacle. The aggression, concentration and timing to do this for 20 laps is something to behold. James Stewart and Chad Reed can do this. They are in the mindset and have the skill somehow to be incredibly risky and yet incredibly calm in processing all the information that is going on with them at any given moment.

I can remember Chad's second year at Yamaha. I was a mechanic there and Reedy had just ripped off a bunch of wins against RC in the second half of the supercross season – to anyone watching the head-to-head races you could tell that Reed had the GOAT covered and went into 2004 50/50 on whether he could win the title. When RC hurt his knee he went to a heavy favourite. Well over the winter Yamaha had signed multi-time SX winner Ezra Lusk and he was going to ride on the support team Mach 1. His bike was virtually the same as the other team guys and early on Lusk was going faster than Reed at the test track.

The #22 camp resorted to filming Lusk while he pounded laps, trying to see what he had. What he had was us thinking that Lusk was back to his early Y2K form and that Reed might have a battle on his hands. Then a funny thing started happening (not funny if you were Yogi) – Ezra started crashing. And then crashing some more. He got to be the human handlebar changing machine real fast. He couldn't sustain the speed that Chad had and for whatever reason lost the edge he had for a month or so. He had 'it' and relied on his past experience of winning to know that Reed's speed was what he had to go if he wanted to win. It was that simple for him, go that fast and win or crash.

History will show us that Lusk was very fast at the Anaheim opener that year but bailed and hurt

his foot, then when he came back he was not the same as in the pre-season and as a matter of fact that was his last year in professional racing. Another example I like to point to is MDK's David Vuillemin in 2007. DV was a former winner that spent some time in the gym in the winter of 2006 and was determined to come out and regain his past glory. The SX series was starting off in Canada at the world rounds and from the first time Vuillemin hit the track he was fast and he was very close to the big three (RC, Stewart and Reed) in practice times. He looked like the old DV and was impressive in the Mains, coming from the back to get a fourth and fifth over the two races.

Then the big season opener at Anaheim came and David found himself on the ground in the first turn when the 20-lap Main Event started. He dusted himself off and blazed through the pack for an amazing sixth, his best lap only four tenths off of third-placed Reed's time. It may not sound that impressive but if you were there and watched him, it was. The next week the circuit moved to Phoenix and Vuillemin crashed heavily in his heat, knocked himself out and was never the same rider again.

It's living on the edge and – unlike Steven Tyler – not all the riders want to do it. It's a risky deal – make a mistake and you're in a cast or, worse, in a chair. There's the typical cry in this electronic age of sports that so and so doesn't push it or is riding for the money and nothing else. Having been around these guys quite a bit in my 11-year mechanic career I can tell you that they all want 'it'. Sure, some guys have bad days and aren't into it but, by and large, they all want to win but I think some just want to win a little bit more y'know?

There's nothing wrong with not taking the risks that I laid out above – after all when you pound yourself into the ground enough it doesn't take a rocket scientist to realise when to cry enough. That makes Reed and Stewart and maybe – just maybe – Villopoto all that more impressive. Maybe we shouldn't hate the riders that don't win, maybe we should just appreciate the ones that do because this game is not an easy one and the consequences for making a small mistake are not pretty.





*The Shed of Dread leans up
against the Bin of Sin and
straddles the Deckchair of Despair*

THE SHED OF DREAD!

FEELING SLIGHTLY NOSTALGIC, SUTTY BIDS ON AND WINS AN EBAY CLASSIC THEN HAS TO SKIP A MORTGAGE PAYMENT TO PAY FOR THE USED BIKE OF HIS DREAMS – THIS 1996 CR250

Words and photos by SuttY

Back in 1996 the Honda CR250R was king of its class – the kind of stand-out performer that topped magazine test shoot-outs and won more than its fair share of major titles. The bike is best remembered as being the machine that Jeremy McGrath won the AMA supercross championship with but in that same year the CR250R also won the world 250cc championship with Stefan Everts, the British Open championship with Rob Herring and even the AMCA Superclass championship with Sean Grosvenor onboard. Dominant or what?

The '96 CR250 was also a success in showrooms too and rapidly sold out from Honda dealers worldwide. There was a waiting list for new 250s at my nearest Honda dealership – Jim Sandiford Motorcycles – that was massive and so I had to wait until the second batch arrived before I could pick up my new bike. Although not vastly different from the '95 I traded in there were some subtle differences – mostly

suspension tweaks and a feeling of slightly more mid-range power as well as some all important cosmetic changes.

But why am I telling you all this? Well, not so long ago I decided to try and pick up a cheapish trials bike from eBay to see me through the winter. This year has been a wash out riding wise and so I wanted to get 2009 off to a cracking start by trying my hand at trials. While trawling the lists of Shercos, Scorpas and Gassers I came across something that wasn't on my shopping list but something that I just had to have none the less.

The ad read... 'Honda CR250 1995 model. This bike is in excellent condition for its year, it's not been messed around with and hasn't done a lot. It's more or less standard, the engine is sweet and all bearings and bushes are fine. There are no water or oil leaks, the suspension is fine and everything works as it should.'

A quick glance at the picture confirmed to my mind that it was a '96 model – the grey

airbox gives the game away – and a pretty good one at that. Aside from the normal dings and scrapes you'd expect to see on a 12-year-old dirt bike this machine looked like it hadn't done much and it was surprisingly standard looking too, even to the point where the original seat cover was still fitted and looking surprisingly unworn. Hmmm.

With an hour to go on the auction the price was still only £700 – I couldn't believe it was going to go so cheap. So before popping out to do my weekly shop (I'm sooo punk rock) I placed my maximum bid and walked away from the computer – not fussed too much by the outcome either way... And approximately three days later – after driving down to Cheshire to collect the item – I was the proud owner of a rather tidy looking 1996 CR250 and an elliptical trainer too but that's another eBay story I don't want to get into right now.

After getting the bike back to base it was apparent that it really was in rather good condition. Judging from the lack of >>





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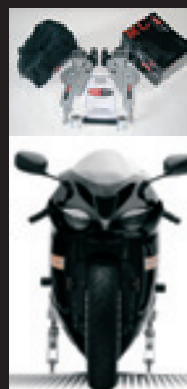
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Tony Marshall takes the Shed of Dread for a few laps around FatCat Motoparc



normal stone damage to the front of the bike – front pipe, fork tubes and fork protectors – I'd say that this bike hasn't been raced much if at all. Everything – except for the handlebars, chain and sprockets – appears to be original as I'd suspected which is surprising but definitely a real bonus when it comes to working with a bike of this age.

My plan now is to completely strip the CR down to its last nut and bolt and then rebuild the beast from the ground up, eventually turning it back into the kind of ride McGrath, Everts and Herring wouldn't have minded racing back in the summer of '96.

The motor is in great shape. Judging from the traces left in the carburettor boot it's sucked a little soil at some point – I'll find if it's done any damage later this month when I strip the top-end down. But after testing the bike thoroughly at FatCat Motoparc recently I've found that shifting is a dream and because of that and because there's no excessive vibration coming from the motor I'm planning on leaving the bottom-end

alone unless further investigation makes me think it might be necessary.

While the motor is out of the frame I'll get the chassis shot blasted, checked for cracks and metal fatigue and then powder coated back to its original colour – white. I'm expecting to have to change all the swingarm and linkage bearings as well as those in the steering head too meaning that as soon as the reworked suspension units come back from Lee at RG3 London the chassis will be sweet.

From there the rebuild will be relatively simple with plenty of pimping going on in an aftermarket parts stylee. If there's one man who knows his stuff when it comes to pimping bikes it's N-Style graphics importer Doc Wob. Wobs was the chap responsible for carrying out the work on DBR's

original Project Shed – a 1986 CR500 back in 2002 – and with over 20 years experience when it comes to pimping and preparing off-road bikes Wobs is handy to know when taking on a project like this.

The first product I asked 'The Doc' – that's his pseudonym in the movies – to lay his hands on for me was a Plasticwerks factory style front number plate. That request was easy to sort as he used to import them from the States along with some other cool and rare bits and bobs but my next must-have item was a little bit tougher.

Back in the '90s Dutch aftermarket parts manufacturer and distributor TMV used to make some very trick looking factory Honda style ignition and clutch covers – that was until Honda forced them to stop production. These covers are now as rare as rocking horse s**t and after spending hours and hours looking online I've asked Wobs to get on the case but if anyone else knows where I might score some please get in touch.

So that's about it for this month – tune in next month when Project Shed gets shown a little tenderness.

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BULLET FROM THE BALTIC!

MEET MATISS KARRO, THE LATVIAN TEENAGER AIMING TO MAKE AN IMPACT ON THE BRITISH AND WORLD MX SCENES IN '09 WITH MVR-D SUZUKI...

Words and photos by Alex Hodgkinson





© Surty

World junior champ Matiss Karro's a top tip for the future and British fans will get to see him in action in the Maxxis champs in '09

CHAMBO SAYS...

MARK ON MATISS >>

"I think we can get Matiss into the top 10 in the world and see him on his way to a factory team, just like we did with Tanel. He has a two-year contract with us but we have a clause in the contract to benefit both of us if a factory team came along with a good deal. I certainly wouldn't want to stand in his way.

"And I genuinely believe he can finish top 10 in 2009 already. He proved at Lommel and Lierop what he can do in sand, he just has to improve on hardpack but he has already made great strides every time he has been over to practice with us. The only worry I have had with him came when he finished well inside the top 10 at Lierop – we hadn't actually signed the contract and I was so worried a factory might come and snap him up ahead of us."



Matiss and Mark shake on the MVR-D deal



© Sully



For the first time since Stefan Everts raced the domestic series in 1996, a reigning world champion will contest next year's British MX championship – Matiss Karro, the 17-year-old world junior champ from Latvia!

It's been a rapid rise to stardom for the kid from Riga. Six months ago he was racing a privateer Honda out of the back of the family camper in second grade races in eastern Europe. Today – with a world title and a top 10 GP finish already to his name – the world is his oyster as he approaches his first full world and Maxxis MX2 campaign in the high-profile MVR-D Suzuki squad.

The talented teen grabbed the chance with both hands when he was offered a permanent GP ride with the Dutch Beuersfoon team as stand-in for Erik Eggens mid-summer but even then Mark Chamberlain and his MVR-D squad were helping out. "I must admit I hadn't noticed Matiss until he came to us in the paddock at the Swedish GP and asked us if we could help," says Mark. "He had an electrical problem and had missed virtually all of free practice. Having got him back on the track I obviously took an interest and he did well, missing out on qualification by just one position as first reserve from the Last Chance after getting hardly any track time all day.

"He got a start in the second moto and was racing with Jake [Nicholls] and Jason [Dougan] so I could see that he'd got it in him. What also impressed me was the way he wanted to help us when we were getting his bike ready. He didn't just sit back and wait, he was getting stuck in with us – a good kid, straight off the top shelf."

And Matiss is equally enthusiastic about his new team. "I like Motovision. It's an awesome team, good bikes and a young crew – last week I was training with Carl Nunn together, that was fun. And British championship tracks will be something else again, not sand but not hardpack like in Italy either."

UK fans have already had a glimpse of his talent when Matiss contested the final round of the '08 Maxxis series at Hawkstone. "I had a good race – I got holeshots but Sword passed me quickly. First race I crashed but still finished fourth, second race I got really tired mid-race and five laps from the end I got really sick but I rode out of it again. I was fourth but one more lap and I could have been back to third."

The Shropshire sand of Hawkstone Park is a long way from Matiss' roots in the Baltic country bordered by Estonia, Lithuania, Belarus and Russia. "I live just outside the capital city of Riga. We just built a new house five kilometres from town. My dad doesn't have a real job but he earns some money making sprockets and brake discs. He raced himself back in the Soviet days in the Baltic championship. Then when I was three he made me a bike with his own hands, put me on it and I loved it straight away."

Money doesn't grow on trees in Latvia – prior to independence in 1991 a Soviet republic – and the economy is not exactly flourishing. "Latvia has always been behind Estonia and business is going bad so there is no money. The interest in motocross as a sport to watch has been growing in recent years but there are actually less riders than when I started. When I started 50cc there were 25 to 30 riders in the class but now there are only five or six."

But the Karros are a determined family in the best off-road tradition and lack of finance was not going to stop them chasing their dream. "We didn't have a lot of money and couldn't afford the diesel even at eastern prices. My dad put a massive gas tank in the car but there are some countries where you can't buy it. One time we ran out in Germany but fortunately it was only a few kilometres to the next station where they had gas."

Matiss' first race outside Latvia was in the Czech Republic when he was six. "People were wondering who I was coming all the way from Latvia but I was fast. I had some bad luck – I was leading the race when the rear suspension broke. That was my dad's bike, he made them for many riders in Latvia. The Aha. Aha Racing. I don't know where he got the engine from but the rest was all hand-made. He made about 20 bikes in total."

Racing – and winning – in eastern Europe was already getting too easy for Matiss by the age of 15 so his coach Avo Leok asked Tinus Nel if he could get him a ride. For those not in the know, Nel is the South African entrepreneur who set world champion Tyla Rattray on the road to stardom and his Vangani team with Tyla, Ben Townley and Tanel Leok still holds legend status.

"Tinus said he could get me in the last GPs and he said to come and see him one evening. He was a nice guy and introduced me to lots of people. My first GP was Ireland and I immediately scored one point. That was a great feeling. There was a lot of mud so they cancelled the race and did it on timed laps, I got 30th in quali. That was the first time I had raced 40 minutes but it was muddy so the speed was low and that helped not to get tired."

"I tried to qualify at Valkenswaard this year on my Honda, then I got offered the chance with Beuersfoon on Suzuki when Erik Eggens decided not to race any more GPs. My first race with them was Teutschenthal and then Sweden. I was running 14th in quali in Germany but another guy had a big crash right in front of me on a jump and I broke the radiator. And in the Last Chance it is too crazy with all those guys who can set fast laps."



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Matiss proved his metal in Sweden but it was at Lommel where people started to sit up and take notice. "I was running eighth in the first race until I ran out of gas two laps from the end. Many people said I just stopped so I could race the world junior at Heerde one week later [riders who have scored world championship points in the season are not allowed to contest the world junior – AH] but it's not true. I had decided myself before the race that if I was top 12 I would go to the finish. The second moto I had a bad start and was running 19th. Then I did stop – it wasn't worth missing the world junior for two points."

And one week later Matiss was world champ! "It was a tough race in Heerde. It was deep sand so that was good for me. First moto I got the holeshot but Glen Coldenhoff passed me. He was faster than me there and I got second but I knew it was mine if I beat him in race two. I started third and quickly took the lead and 2-1 wins no matter what."

The title win made the dailies back home in Latvia where Matiss found himself big news. "We don't have a lot of sporting success in Latvia so they were very happy. And it was our second title in three years because Ivo Steinbergs won the title when it was held in Latvia."

Steinbergs' career never took off but Matiss doesn't intend to go the same way and laid the foundations with two stunning rides at Lierop. "We fitted bigger tanks this time, I was riding good and I got two good starts. That makes it so much easier. First race I got tired and went back from sixth to ninth but I think Lierop is the toughest track of all. In the second race I was able to push forward from ninth to fourth but then I was finished and went back to eighth for seventh on the day. That was awesome."

Then reality hit home one week later in Faenza as he failed to qualify. "Hardpack is not for me at the moment. I was just too slow. I might still have made it – I was 14th in the quali race – but then I turned my knee. I had crashed in Lommel and my bike had landed on my knee and it is still a problem sometimes."

But the young Latvian is determined to work on his weaknesses. "Now in the winter I'm going to train a lot on hardpack tracks in Spain and Italy to improve my speed, then I think I will race the first rounds of the Italian championship. I have talked about this with Mark and he said he will take the team down for these races."

Mid-summer the MX2 world series takes its first trip to Latvia with a GP at Kegums and it's a race Matiss is looking forward to. "It's a really nice track, sandy. Not all of our tracks are sand but most are and even our hard tracks are not hard like in Italy."

But he has not lost sight of the larger target. "I am looking for top 15-20 in the championship. I have a two-year contract but Mark said that if a factory team came along and wanted me he will not stand in my way. He did the same for Tanel and that's one of the things I like about Mark, he is open, he a good person."

With such mutual respect and talent, 2009 could be the year that both Latvia and MVR-D Suzuki establish themselves firmly on the world stage.



© Sully



© Sully

The young Latvian impressed on his British championship debut at Hawkstone Park

MASTER CHEF!

PROMOTING YOUR CHEF TO TEAM MANAGER COULD WELL BE A RECIPE FOR DISASTER BUT THAT'S EXACTLY WHAT MARTIN HONDA DID WITH THEIR VERY OWN MASTER OF PASTA LORENZO RESTA...

Words and photos by JP O'Connell

Something my parents taught me and something I try to teach my kids is that manners cost nothing and being polite and courteous can go a long way to opening doors for you in this world. The same rules apply in motocross and there's proof of this in the GP paddock – a man who's got where he is today not through his ability to ride a bike fast, nor through his ability to build a bike that goes fast but through his ability to communicate well with people.

Lorenzo Resta started out his career in motorsports as a chef preparing food in a hospitality unit for the Benelli Superbike team but has now worked up to the role of sporting director for Martin Honda – the Japanese manufacturer's leading MX team – who are considered to be one of the most professional outfits in the paddock.

It was a chance meeting with team owner Paolo Martin at a boating exhibition that brought the two together and ensured that Lorenzo made the move from road racing to motocross. "I only met him for an hour over that weekend," explains Paolo. "But I said to Lorenzo you must come work for me at my motocross team. I kept pushing, pushing and pushing until he agreed."

In Lorenzo's first season with Martin the team had Mickael Pichon riding for them and Resta would translate between French and Italian and from English to Italian just to help out. As well as French, Italian and English the 35-year-old can also speak Spanish and German.

"Maybe it's because I'm just curious and I put my nose everywhere," says Resta. "I have a big one so it's easy! For this reason I grew within the team every year and I have to say a big thank you to Paolo because he let me grow. I have to say I always dreamed of having the job that I have now, I used to have a normal job as a financial adviser and I also studied law at university but I was always dreaming of this job – I love it and I would work for free to do a job like this."

"Something I have learned from Paolo Martin is to never stop dreaming, we dreamed of winning a race with Marc De Reuver this year and we did it – for the future the dream is winning a championship with Honda."

>>

Buono appetito! Martin Honda's sporting director Lorenzo Resta hams it up in the team's kitchen



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Marc De Reuver helps create the team's happy atmosphere



During his time working on the hospitality side of the team Resta could often be found in the GP media centre chatting with journalists, FIM officials and people from Youthstream – not because he needed to but just to satisfy his curiosity and try to find what he could do in the future and exactly how the sport he was involved in worked.

In 2004 when the series was heading to South Africa Lorenzo was told that the team wouldn't be able to pay for him to make the trip. Rather than accept this and stay home in Rome, Resta offered to cook for the whole of the paddock if they would all help out with a small donation to get him there.

"Paolo provided me with some food and all the boxes, Ducati Superbike provided us with a huge box with a kitchen inside, Youthstream with hotel accommodation and the sponsors with the transportation," recalls Resta. "During the three days of the GP I provided 1200 meals. It was pure passion for me, I hardly slept. I would finish cooking at around 6pm then I would spend the night sightseeing and taking in the atmosphere before getting back to the hotel at 6am, having a quick shower and then getting back to the track to prepare breakfast!

"I did this because I wanted to get to know everybody – the riders, the mechanics, everybody. It was like we were all one huge community. It was funny seeing fighters like Pichon and Everts eating lunch together. Everyone believed in this special thing and it was such a success that we did this again in '05 and '06 at both the South African and Japanese GPs."

Youthstream saw that Resta's idea had merit and built on his idea when they provided Ristorante Italiano – a mobile restaurant which provides food in every GP including the overseas events.

Since then Lorenzo's enthusiasm, charm and people skills have served him well and at the

beginning of 2008 when Martin Honda were looking for a new sporting director, rather than look at former champions or recently retired riders they looked no further than their own kitchen.

"At cooking he is very good," explains Paolo. "But he also has a way with people and I saw a possibility of him doing something else in the team. My team has a good family atmosphere – very funny – and Lorenzo he has a talent in this way. He also has a way with the riders, he can communicate very well with them and so I thought maybe we can utilise these skills and maybe he could be our sporting director."

The transition to team manager wasn't necessarily an easy one as suddenly the man who usually cooked for the team was now in charge of it.

"The first big problem for me was to change. I don't mean personally or my mentality but to change in the face of the people that work with you because all of the people I worked with looked on me as being the cook. They were thinking what are you doing in the press room – you are the cook? Why are you speaking with the sponsors – you are the chef? Why are you speaking with the riders as regards to their contracts? When I speak with people that I just met this year it is no problem as they only know me as the manager.

"It's funny, at the beginning of the year one of the mechanics asked Paolo if I am able to make the tyre choice for the bike. Paolo said 'what do you think – am I some kind of fool that would let the cook make a decision about the bike set-up?' and now everyone is used to what I do and it is all good, it's nice to remember what I was and where I came from – I will never forget that."

It is an interesting set-up and one that speaks volumes about Resta's character that a team as big as Martin should choose a sporting director with no >>



With team boss Paolo Martin



Swiss team member Julien Bill

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De Reuver's overall win at Mantova fulfilled the first part of Lorenzo's dream



bike knowledge whatsoever. When you look at the other managers in the paddock, names like Geboers (Suzuki), Everts (KTM), Thorpe (CCM) and De Carli (Yamaha) spring up.

In his own words Resta has no idea about the bikes and works on everything that is not technical including the finances – don't forget he was a financial advisor in a previous life – and public relations with the press, riders and the sponsors. The atmosphere under the Martin awning is a reflection of Resta's personality – it's a happy place with lots of laughter although having De Reuver on the team certainly helps with that!

"We try to keep a family atmosphere, a funny atmosphere but professional. You look at our bikes, the mechanics they do an unbelievably good job – they work so hard. We don't want to lose this side, it means that when we finish and pack everything away we want to enjoy the work that we have done together. I think we have one of the most beautiful jobs in the world – we travel all over the world, we meet lots of new people and we're getting paid for it!"

For a single man it sounds like a dream job. Resta isn't single but luckily for him he has a very understanding wife who allows her husband to follow his dream job wherever it happens to take him around the world.

"It wasn't easy for me to explain to her what I did at

the beginning," Resta explains. "You know it seems like you don't want to be at home, you want to go watch the races, look at the beautiful girls but of course it's not like that. I bring her once to the World Superbikes to show her just how much I work, just how long I work. I remember when I first started work for this team I was working 20-21 hours a day for three days on the trot, then I'd spend Monday sleeping in the truck while we travelled back. My wife now understands pretty well and she is like my boss in that she says spread your wings and go make what you want in life."

With Lorenzo now sat at the helm a new chef has been brought in to try and keep up Martin's reputation for the best food in the paddock but, as the saying goes, 'you can take the man out of the kitchen but you can't take the kitchen out of the man'.

"It's funny but I just can't help keeping an eye on the food. You know on Tuesday once we had finished setting up I had not much to do so I asked the cook if he would mind if I cooked – nothing much, only for six people but for me cooking is also a passion."

As for what the future holds for Resta he is only certain of one thing. "I will always remember the first race that we won here and for me it is a dream to win a title with this team – at the moment that is all I am focussed on. Maybe I will end up working for Honda in the future but I'm not thinking that far ahead."



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Mat Rebaud needs razor-sharp reactions to avoid a freestyle pile-up on the Saturday



© Sarah Gutierrez



The lighting show is actually toned down this year...

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Braaaaaaaaaaaaaaaap!



Max Anstie – the most popular rider at Bercy?
C'est vrai!



Bercy has always been a place that creates heroes and the latest in a long line of visiting Americans to shine is James Stewart who descends on the French capital with the L&M Yamaha team and goes 18 for 18 over three days. In fact, Bubba only fails to lead two laps on the way to this momentous series of wins in a performance that must rank as the most dominant ever at Europe's biggest SX.

Okay, David Vuillemin swept all before him in 2000/01 – but back then they only rode twice each night so the Cobra only had to net 12 wins in two years. And with rivals like Jeremy McGrath it could also be claimed that the Frenchman had more to beat – but who else could the organisers have rolled out?

Chad Reed is back home in Oz promoting his new national SX series but current AMA number two Kevin Windham is in Paris and so too is Justin Brayton, an unlikely SX hero with a permanent week-old growth on his chin who already took a second in Vegas to prove that you can race a 450 Toomer successfully in SX. Indeed, it's the 24-year-old from Fort Dodge in Iowa who pays tribute to Stewart after mounting the podium

second each night. "I gotta be happy. I just finished second to the fastest guy in the world!"

Bubba himself is bubbling with enthusiasm, no longer the recluse who shuns the media. He comes to the journo den before racing on Friday and again after it is all over Sunday evening to chat and rave about his trip. "When I walked the track before practice it seemed a little narrow but when you are riding it you don't notice, it is so well laid out. It's not so different to the tracks we race back home.

"I couldn't believe it when I came in and saw I was two seconds-a-lap faster than the rest but my corner speed is even faster on the Yamaha, I'm just so at home on the bike and there's a real good feeling in the team. It's a lot of fun. This is what I have been looking for. We've done the sights but most of all I couldn't wait for the opening ceremony. This place is something really special. The first priority is the SX series but after that's over I plan to come to Europe and do some GPs. I don't know which ones, we haven't sorted that out yet.

"It was tough to win every race and equal David's record and I want to come back next year and try to do it again. And if you guys can put on a police escort like I got from the airport when I arrived I'll be back all the

time. That was cool, I never had that back home!"

With bills to pay there is a noticeable saving on lighting in the hall but the opening is actually the best for years with cheerleader mother hen Sophie in pin-stripes, Popeye hat and toting a machine gun to present the host team as the French Connection in a vintage Citroen before a Bubba video heralds his entry from the catacombs wearing an afro wig.

The freestylers are also on form – les freres Pages having stepped up their act big time. Charlie ends the weekend with his first ever 360 rotation which he nearly lands clean and the trick riders push the limits all the way with Eigo Sato slamming the thankfully cushioned wall on Sunday after a Cordova flip. But perhaps the closest escape comes on Saturday when Mat Rebaud's throttle fails to respond as he hits the ramp leading a train. The world number one reacts instantly, forcing the SX250 into the pit and jumping off – if he'd landed it the other four would have piled into him!

Stewart's only sniff of defeat comes in the Saturday final of the KO competition. Kevin Windham, struggling on Friday, is back on it to transfer through the other half but most onlookers suspect a rigged race as he shuts out Bubba at turn one. Kevin is still in front as >>

they exit the main hall, all eyes switch to the screens above the arena and then the screens go dead! Coincidence? It brings the loudest roar of the weekend but the suspense is killing as they wait for the dynamic duo to reappear with K-Dub still in front but only to the next combination.

Stewart is simply too good for the rest – his jumping is perfection, he's on the power miles before anyone else leaving the turns and he floats across the whoops like JC (not Josh Coppins, the other one) walking out to the fishing boat.

David Vuillemin is fast all weekend but can't get out of the gate. Bud change the gearing for Sunday and at least he's in the frame entering turn one. DV12 hammers the whoops to pass Brayton and make the final in the One on One to the delight of the fans and in the last race of the weekend he runs down Windham for a moto third place. At 31 David has discovered a new lease of life, has trimmed his frame to fighting weight again and is glad to be back in Europe. "I wasn't enjoying racing in America. Nobody has a chance

against Bubba, he's too good. And it's getting dangerous riding SX on a 450 out there. This is more fun."

Marvin Musquin is the only guy in the main programme on a 250F but he clips the wings of many a 450, including Windham who he passes in the opening race on Saturday. Josh Grant is amazingly consistent on the first night to mount the podium but it can't last. The King of Crash snots the whoops in the first race both Saturday and Sunday – some things never change. Benjy Coisy follows suit, though he has the speed to keep everyone bar Stewart in sight when he does stay on two wheels and is the undisputed number one regular on the European circuit when his bike is running smoothly.

And then there is Max Anstie! He is Prince of Bercy for the third year in a row and his popularity is so great that Lariviere even switch the support act from 85s to 125s to keep him. His Friday race is astounding. Left at the gate as the Toomer bogs, Max has the leader in sight as he tangles with a rival in the whoops and has to

start again. By lap four he has passed the lot but slams the bank at the end of a combination and has to do it from sixth all over again. And that's all in six laps!

Promoted to face the French 450s in the Trophée Olaf, Max opens on Friday by just missing the podium after blocking his way past at least one a lap, then on Saturday he rails turn one without shutting the throttle to round the lot, only to bin it later in the lap.

The crowd wanted to lynch Mike Alessi for planting Pierre-Andre Renet a couple of years back but they don't mind Max putting their boys down and he gets a standing ovation from the gallery after every race.

Even Max's lap times are on a par with everyone bar Bubba and the 15-year-old, never short of something to say on the podium, promises his fans on Sunday that he'll be back next year. It'll be interesting to see how they integrate Max into the format because Bercy XXVI was just Frenchies and Yanks – no World Select – but one thing is sure. Max may not be able to dislodge Bubba but he will rattle a few more adult cages...



K-Dub makes the podium two nights out of three



RESULTS

KING OF BERCY – FRIDAY >>

1 James Stewart, 2 Justin Brayton, 3 Josh Grant, 4 David Vuillemin, 5 Kevin Windham

SATURDAY >>

1 Stewart, 2 Brayton, 3 Windham, 4 Ben Coisy, 5 Marvin Musquin

SUNDAY >>

1 Stewart, 2 Brayton, 3 Windham, 4 Vuillemin, 5 Steve Boniface

KING OF BERCY >>

1 Stewart, 2 Brayton, 3 Windham, 4 Vuillemin, 5 Musquin

PRINCE OF BERCY – FRIDAY >>

1 Max Anstie, 2 Boris Maillard, 3 Alexis Gaudree, 4 Jordi Tixier, 5 Laurent Thibault

SATURDAY >>

1 Anstie, 2 Tixier, 3 Maillard, 4 Arnaud Aubin, 5 Ludwig de Saint Etienne

SUNDAY >>

1 Anstie, 2 Mickael Leveau, 3 Aubin, 4 Maillard, 5 De Saint Etienne

PRINCE OF BERCY >>

1 Anstie, 2 Maillard, 3 Tixier, 4 Leveau, 5 Aubin

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RAGE



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TAKE YOUR PICK!

YOUTH RACERS SPOILT FOR CHOICE AS
PROVISIONAL 2009 CALENDAR IS RELEASED

STARRIDERS!

RAGE'S ROLL OF HONOUR

CORRIE SOUTHWOOD



Scott James flies the flag for Team Green in '09

PROVISIONAL CALENDAR

BYMX

Rnd 1	Mildenhall	March 28/29
Rnd 2	Leuchars	April 25/26
Rnd 3	Little Silver	May 16/17
Rnd 4	Dean Moor	June 20/21
Rnd 5	Cusseyes Gorse	July 18/19
Rnd 6	Brampton	August 29/30
Rnd 7	Foxhill	September 12/13

MASTERS

Rnd 1	Culham	March 14/15
Rnd 2	Dean Moor	April 18/19
Rnd 3	Pontrilas	May 9/10
Rnd 4	Foxhill	June 6/7
Rnd 5	Landrake	July 4/5
Rnd 6	Hawkstone Park	August 8/9
Rnd 7	Whitby	September 5/6

BSMA

Rnd 1	Chippenham	March 21/22
Rnd 2	Holsworthy	May 23/24
Rnd 3	Pontrilas	June 27/28
Rnd 4	Landrake	July 25/26
Rnd 5	Brookthorpe	August 22/23
Rnd 6	Stratford	September 26/27

EYC

Rnd 1	Venue TBC	April 11/12
Rnd 2	Venue TBC	May 9/10
Rnd 3	Venue TBC	June 6/7
Rnd 4	Venue TBC	July 4/5
Rnd 5	Venue TBC	July 18/19
Rnd 6	Venue TBC	Aug 8/9
Rnd 7	Venue TBC	Sept 5/6
Rnd 8	Venue TBC	TBC

RED BULL PRO

Rnd 1	Venue TBC	May 10
Rnd 2	Venue TBC	June 7
Rnd 3	Venue TBC	July 19
Rnd 4	Venue TBC	Aug 16
Rnd 5	Venue TBC	Aug 30
Rnd 6	Venue TBC	Sept 13

TAKE YOUR PICK!

YOUTH RACERS ARE SPOILT FOR CHOICE...

With the EYC, BYMX, Masters and BSMA having all rolled out their calendars for next season's competitions – producing many destructive date clashes along the way – it's fast becoming a case of 'you pays your money and makes your choices'.

In their own separate and truly inimitable ways, the BYMX and the Elite Youth Cup continue to jockey for position to be acclaimed as the number one series with both of them making significant changes for 2009.

The BYMX have a new race director onboard with a remit to oversee events and deliver consistency across all seven rounds. They have also added a new adult Clubman class to the weekend's programme to boost numbers and increase the family appeal, together with a full reinstatement of the four-race programme across the card.

The MC Federation have also raised their game by coupling up three rounds of the Elite Youth Cup series with the new Red Bull Pro series and extending the age range for the Open class youth riders, in effect creating their own version of an U21 championship while operating a two-tier system with the 14 to 17-year-olds being given the option of racing in a Rookie class.

With the series also offering up the added attraction of 250cc two-stroke racing it's bound to be a popular choice with a large section of the Open class youth and right now the whole series as a concept is the talk of the paddock.

Taking a quick straw poll across the winter paddocks, there also seems to be some changes in thinking and direction as to the best way of wrapping up a youth career and making the transition into adult and pro racing from the 16 and 17-year-olds.

Should I stay or should I go? It's a question that pops up at the end of every season. It's really good however to see that the main competitions next year will be boosted by the likes of Scott James, Josh Waterman and Josh Spinks who are all mixing youth and adult racing. I suspect there will be other guys too who have earlier announced it would be solely pro racing for them in '09 who end up having a little rethink of their options – particularly as the new Elite Youth Cup/Red Bull Pro series offers them the chance of experiencing the best of both worlds on the same weekend.

Josh Waterman will be sporting new team colours as he makes the switch to the Danger KTM outfit after nine years with Team Green. A triple assault on the BYMX, MX2 and the ACU U21 series will be Josh's main priorities with the possibility of selected Maxxis rounds. Scott James along with Connor Walkley will be spearheading Team Green's youth campaign with Scott mixing youth and Maxxis while Josh Spinks will again carry the Redline KTM attack on all ACU fronts.

On the subject of decision and change, all the very best to Sam Davis as he's all set to chance his arm on the road racing circuit.



Danger KTM colours for Josh Waterman

LOCALHERO!

BRUMMIE BOY'S A REAL ALL-ROUNDER...

Joe Jones is one of that rare breed of off-road youth riders who gets the job done at both enduro and motocross events with a really successful size nine boot being firmly planted in both camps right now.

The 15-year-old Brummie's first insight into the world of off-road events was watching dad Dave riding in the Cotswold enduro series as an infant. Joe began riding as a five-year-old on a Malaguti 50 before entering the world of competition at the age of 10.

His long list of achievements kicked off with a class win in the U12s section first time out on a KX65 at a Wirral Off Road event. After a change of machinery to an 85cc Honda in '04 the national titles started to roll in as Joe scooped the GBHS U12s that year and the Over 12s the following year.

Over recent years Joe has developed an almost effortless style of riding born out of longer distance events such as the Dawn to Dusk competitions he's won at intermediate level in both '05 and '06. Since '07 even longer three-hour endurance races with the adult section of the Cotswold club have added to his experience and proved invaluable in the strength

and stamina stakes.

The extra energy and honed technique is clear to see as Joe has also excelled on Weston Beach over the years posting fifth, eighth and fourth-placed finishes in the last three years on 85cc machinery. The versatility doesn't end there either as Joe has also made inroads into supercross with a fine result at the recent Sheffield show, placing seventh in the 125cc final at his very first attempt.

At the DBS Joe was presented with his number one plate for his efforts in winning this year's GBXC series. Throughout the winter months Joe will be campaigning the 125cc Benton Haulage KTM to superb effect in the Wilden series as he remains unbeaten, showing the 144cc pack a clean pair of heels week after week.

Joe has remained very much a local hero to Midland events, largely due to the expense that comes with performing on the national stage. With a bit more backing and a mainline sponsor onboard to add to the help the Jones family get from Bentons Haulage, RAL Construction and Wildmoor you really get the impression the Jones boy could be far more than a local hero...



MAX!

AWESOME ANSTIE CLEANS UP IN SHEFFIELD AND PARIS

Words by Max Anstie

Sheffield, yeah! I had the coolest Welsh factory mechanic ever – ha ha! It went really well and I managed to finish on top. I also got to ride with the pros in practice and do a head-to-head race and it was awesome to ride with some of the bigger guys for a few laps (if any of you are wondering why I didn't race pro at Sheffield or Bercy it's because I am still racing amateur out in America for another year).

After the supercross it was half-term from school, dad put on a training camp from the Monday through Thursday and amazingly it didn't rain too much! The likes of Alfie Bowtell, Luke Norris, Charlie Mills and Bradley Ward etc came over to do some wheelies.

After many laps at our SX track it was time to head over to Paris for the spectacular Bercy supercross. As usual Jordan came with me to be my start device putter-onner (Jordan will get it) and he bought me a mountain bike to use while we cycled around. Jord wouldn't do any backflips or 360s in the skate park so I had to show him how it was done.

The racing as usual at Bercy was amazing. This year I was racing bigger guys in the 125 junior class. I managed to get a few good laps in timed training on Friday and go to the line in pole position. On the '09 125 KTMs they have a different clutch system which took a little getting used to. Well, I got over the gate all right then just completely stalled it – ha ha! I managed to get going again and pull burnouts through the whoops. Before I knew it I was in the lead and pulling away ever so slightly before I gooned it and went down. When I got going again I was in fourth. With only one lap to go I managed to get back up and start scrubbing again. I passed for the lead in the tunnel and managed to stay on two wheels till the end.

After my race the event co-ordinator came up to me and said that I could race the 450 non-qualifier race. We sorted it out so that it wasn't a pro race then I was lined up alongside some big boys. I actually got a good start and was in third until some guy slid out in front of me causing me to lose a load of positions. So I was coming back through and this Yamaha guy thought he could push me up the berm. I then decided to hit him so hard he had to pay to get back into the arena. Sorted him out! After that little mishap I managed to salvage a fourth position.

On Saturday another good qualifying session put me on pole in the 125 class. A better start in the Main made it a little easier and I managed to stay on two wheels to take the win. Then it was 450 time... My 125 managed to jump out the gate to an amazing start and take the holeshot! Going down the whoops a Kawasaki managed to give it some gas and get by me so I set him up proper style in the tunnel. I came under him and hit this guy so hard he rebounded off the wall and his bars went through my back spokes mangling my wheel and his bars. So that was the end of that one!

Once again I managed to squeeze pole in timed training on the last and final day of racing at Paris. The Main again went well, I pulled the holeshot and put in some good laps to take the win. I couldn't race the 450 race on Sunday because we had to catch the train back to England and then the very next morning at 6am catch a flight from London to Los Angeles where the real training takes place...

Max



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STARRIDERS!

RAGE'S ROLL OF HONOUR

With everyone busy ticking the boxes and voting for their own particular favourites in the DBR Awards 2008 here are my suggestions for youth honours.

And my nominations are... Scott Elderfield, Luke Hawkins, Ben Watson, Bradley Pocock, Ryan Houghton, Jordan Godwin, James Dunn and Ben Green. Without doubt any one of the above mentioned riders has a massive shout for this year's rider of the year accolade.

Luke Hawkins is a triple champion PAR excellence and he's been rapid, totally professional and looked sublime all season. Bradley Pocock is arguably the most improved rider in the country, peaking at just the right time and now represents as good a prospect as there is for '09 in his age bracket. Kick on from here Brad and the world's your whasit. Likewise Ryan Houghton – as a 13-year-old he has no rivals right now and has produced a season full of truly outstanding battling performances.

You could also argue that Ben Watson would have been a double

champion for the second year running if he had stayed on these shores and not missed rounds of the Elite and BYMX. What an achievement that would have been on the back of last year's exploits at 65cc level for an 11-year-old? Jordan Godwin is another double champion and together with James Dunn and the rest of the Small Wheel heroes they have scored highly all season long in the value for money stakes.

In any other year Ben Green's exploits as yet another two-time winner of BYMX and Elite would have his name firmly in the frame too but the one name not mentioned so far has just about eclipsed all contenders. Scott Elderfield on the KTM, Suzuki and finally Honda has delivered the goods on the BYMX stage and the Elite Youth Cup platform. And he also got his name in the record books for a heroic ride at the Canada Heights Maxxis round where as a 15-year-old on a 250 two-stroke he blew away most of the Maxxis establishment right under the noses of the factory bosses – it really was the stuff of dreams.



Small Wheel warrior
Callan Cooper

WINNERS!

MIKE'S MEN

Rider of the year:

Scott Elderfield

Most improved rider:

Bradley Pocock

Outstanding endeavour:

Ryan Houghton

Still on course to be a superstar:

Ben Watson and Connor Walkley

Value for money:

The Elite Youth Cup and the Small Wheel racers

Unluckiest rider of the year:

Ben Howell

Best newcomer:

Conrad Mewse

SPOTLIGHT ON...

JAKE DEACON

DOB: 28-6-99

HOMETOWN: Lancing, West Sussex

With most of the top class 65cc runners from this year's national campaigns now reaching the upper age limit and moving up to 85cc machinery, the gap in the junior ranks is about to be filled by a new crop of nine and 10-year-old racers.

Conrad Mewse has already dipped his nine-year-old toes into the red hot atmosphere of national competition and received massive acclaim for his exploits so far. Jake Deacon from Lancing in West Sussex is another young guy in the same age bracket on a similar mission. Jake also tested the waters this year, enjoyed the buzz of top-flight competition and without doubt he will be back for more of the same in '09 with his eyes set firmly on the national podiums.

Jake first threw his leg over a bike in real competition during the 2005 season and went on to win the Mid Sussex club's Auto championship the following year. In 2007 Jake continued to progress as he posted a sixth place finish in the East Kent club championship at Junior 65cc level. And 2008 has been the best year so far with Jake winning the Portsmouth club

championship and also recording a runner-up finish in the East Kent club standings.

This summer Team Deacon decided to test his skills on the big stage – and to good effect too! Securing a national race win and claiming second overall on the weekend at just his second tilt at a national competition was a real result for Jake at the BSMA's Farleigh Castle round. At the end of the season Jake also entered the final round of this year's Elite Youth Cup at his favourite Canada Heights circuit and once more caught the eye with a series of impressive performances, especially on day two riding the '09 machine and running in the top six at times.

For next year Jake will be majoring on the BYMX and the Elite Youth Cup competitions plus the BSMA series if the calendar allows.

Jake would like to thank everyone who has got behind him so far including Big Rob, Paul at Cedar Construction, Martin Ireson and Onfire products for all the help and support they have given along with mum and dad who keep Team Deacon on the road.

Throughout the winter Jake has the local south coast winter series to focus on but the main challenge kicks off next spring. "Bring it all on," says Jake!

For more from Jake hook up to www.jakedeaconmx.com

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JOHN JOE WRIGHT

Age: 9

Bike: KTM 65

Years riding: 6

Kit: Thor

Number of trophies: Lost count

Titles: 2

Broken bones: 0

Sponsor: MotoX World, Consett

EXPERT EX-PAT!

JOE TEARS IT UP IN SPAIN

With the current trend of flying off to the sun to escape the ravages of the British winter and enjoy some warm weather training and racing, it's interesting to hear of one family that have definitely taken the idea a step further.

Back in Y2K Joseph Lester and his family from Stourbridge moved to Alicante in southern Spain where the 12-year-old has been pitting his skills against the local lads.

Racing a CRF150 in the Community of Valencia championships, Joseph has just enjoyed his best season so far. In this year's final round he



posted third and second place finishes in the two races on the championship card to give him second on the day and make him sub champion for the Community of Valencia this year.

Keep up the good work Joseph – and if you need any photos taking give me a call, eh!



Any starring on a Rage playing card of your very own? Check out John Joe's details, substitute his info for yours and send everything in along with a decent photo to the postal address on page 15. If you've got a digital pic (between two and four meg only please) email it along with your details to rage@dirtbikerider.co.uk



WIZARDS OF OZ!

BILLY AND DOOGS WAVE GOODBYE TO THAILAND AND FLY OFF TO AUSTRALIA FOR PART TWO OF THEIR JOLLY HOLS...

Words and photos by Billy MacKenzie

Next stop was Australia! I'd been looking forward to this way more than I had Thailand but Thailand was something that many people had told me to see so I'm glad I did but I have been dreaming of Australia's Gold Coast for years!

We flew into Sydney and decided to see what the nightlife was like. We booked into our first hostel of the trip – another thing I had looked forward to doing. We had been told that Sydney was awesome for a night out but I'll tell you what – it's s***! Don't go – ever! The best thing about Sydney was the hostel. We met lots of cool people again and shared a dorm with four others. The hostel had a bar downstairs and was throwing a pyjama party! So, naturally, everyone who is staying in the hostel gets pretty drunk and runs riot round the hallways – kinda how I could imagine boarding school being like! So that ended up being the best night but we had to get up at 5am the next morning to catch a flight to the Gold Coast so I hit the hay early at like 1am and Jase was still wide open until about 4.30am! He didn't even make it back to his bed – my alarm went off and he was nowhere to be seen! I finally found him next door in a dorm full of girls and literally had to drag him to the bus! Then we jumped on the plane and headed to Surfers' Paradise...

We had been told this was 'the place to go' but it was s**t. So far Sydney and Surfers' Paradise had let me down big time! I was starting to think Australia isn't what I had cracked it up to be. After two nights in Surfers we decided to head off up to Fraser Island, somewhere I knew would be good. Lots of people had told me about this place so we hired a car and bought the new Kings of Leon CD which would be the album of Australia! We played that album over and over for two weeks and I'm still not sick of any song on the album – it rocks!

We drove four hours north to Rainbow Beach and set up camp in another hostel. I started really liking the hostels – they're the best place to meet people and everyone was so friendly! We stayed there for a couple nights and had a bonfire down the beach both nights. We met two English girls on the first night called Neha and Suzy who joined our little fire. It's the simplest most spontaneous things that always turn out best for me – there were only us four sitting round a s**t fire with some drink and a little torch. At first it was only me and Jase – it was only on the beach that we called the girls over and invited them for a drink but that's the cool thing about travelling, no-one is in a rush, no-one has to be anywhere to do anything, you can go with the flow. I hooked up with Neha!

We booked up for a three-day, two-night camping trip on Fraser Island with nine other people in a 4x4. Again, we had been told it was the best thing to do so we went for it. But as we sat through the video of 'rules' on the island I was over it! We sat through some gruelling half-hour video of s**t you can't do on the island and I looked round the people I was gonna be travelling with and thought 'what a bunch of goons!' – I really didn't think I would have anything in common with any of them. They all looked weird! You know how

people judge each other etc – well I was doing it.

I actually went and asked if I could have my money back and if I could just do a 4x4 thing with Jase so we could rally the thing around the island and cause some mischief! No refund though and we had to go with the trip... Good job because it turned out to be the most awesome three days of the trip. Our crew consisted of four Frenchies – three girls and one dude – an English girl, a really weird farmer kid who was actually weird and three Irish, two guys one girl! All of us were in this big 4x4 as I rallied the tits off it down the beach. We all went from strangers to best buds over a few boxes of goon (wine in a box)! The Irish guy called Jimmy was the funniest – he cracked me up the whole trip. Our first night was at a campsite thing where the curfew was 9pm! That didn't stop us though! We all went on a hike at a rather stupid hour to find a freshwater lake nearby.

There was another group following us so all in all there were 20 of us in two big 4x4s. We got to the lake just as the sun set so it was pretty dark and we couldn't really see anything! Me and a Canadian guy jumped straight in! It was a pretty mad feeling, swimming around in a lake when it was dark. My imagination started working overtime, like a little kid after a horror movie! So I jumped out and we had to try to navigate our way home via a 5km hike through the jungle in the pitch dark! We all got back safely though and started our little BBQ! I was chief cook along with Jimmy but I had a little too much to drink and went to bed early. There was one French chick there who I really liked but I didn't know what to say or do – I was in a right pickle – so I left it that night! I was in bed but I could hear everyone going wild outside – it sounded like they were having an awesome time but I was just too tired to do anything.

The following day we visited another awesome, absolutely beautiful lake at the bottom of a very steep sand dune. We all chilled there for the day swimming around and doing silly stunts into the water. I had my eye on Frenchie the whole day (Alexia) – she was so hot! I felt like a total perv but she was looking stunning and what really did it for me was when she went skinny dipping! We headed to the next campsite where again we started on the goon and chilled out watching the waves roll in. I went skinny dipping in the sea and had a wash. Then as we were all chilling on the dunes Alexia came and sat next to me! I went in for it straight away – I turned my head and laid it on her lap and she didn't pull away so that was it, I was in. That eventually ended up in a cuddle, then later on we hooked up! I was pumped!

That night I was out for the party though. The Irish boys were in full effect and the Canadian boys left their group to come and join our cool group! We all sat down and had another awesome BBQ – we even made our own beef burgers! We drank all night with the Irish and the Canadians, Jase had an early night and I made up for the previous night!

Soon as we got back from Fraser Island, me and Alexia were inseparable pretty much and her and her friend decided to jump in the car with me and Jase and

drive down to Byron Bay with us which I thought was really cool. Going with the flow, just like I said! We arrived in Byron Bay with only two nights left of our Australian adventure – we had messed our trip up with Sydney and Surfers' Paradise but we really did save the best for last. We were recommended a hostel called 'The Arts Factory' and when we got there it was by far the coolest hostel yet and the people around the area were the friendliest yet.

The first night we stayed in a big tepee! It had 10 beds all in a big circle again with lots of hot chicks and cool dudes! We got there Saturday night but we were all really tired from Fraser and the drive so we had a chilled one and stayed in. The next night we decided we'd go out and see what the little town was like though so we started early by having a few drinks round the hostel, then headed out to some bars. We ditched the Frenchies cos we thought there would be plenty of eye candy around after seeing some of the beauties walking through the hostel. However, it was Sunday night and we really did pick the wrong night to go out. Just as we started getting into it in the club, like actually having a little dance and stuff, the music stopped at midnight! We were all gutted! The Frenchies had found us and we were all together again but the music had stopped and we wanted more! Our plan was to go back to the hostel and jump in the car and listen to Kings of Leon for a while but on the way I heard 'Sex is on Fire' coming from the distance! It was like a calling!

I followed the music to a cool little house party where I gingerly entered and asked if we could gatecrash. The guy was called Scarfy, he was 36 and had about 15 people all dancing and drinking in his house. Everyone was having such an awesome time and he didn't even hesitate to let us come in – it was one of the best nights ever. The music was awesome, every song that was played was amazing, there were lots of different people again including a girl from London in some skintight three-quarter length polka-dot trousers that Jase fell in love with! And I don't blame him! It was such a soulful, funky party – it was like no-one had a worry in the world, no-one had to be anywhere or do anything. Everyone was just enjoying the moment. We stayed until the sun came up, danced, talked and drank until everyone eventually went back to where they came from.

Well that's about it guys – after our trip we headed to New Zealand to do the Taupo International where I finished second behind Josh Coppins. I had a really good race – I was on an '09 Honda and it was amazing, me and Josh went at it hard in a couple motos and I'm surprised I even remembered how to ride a bike! But the race was cool, I did a sky dive and a bungee jump so I topped the trip off with an adrenaline-packed week to get me in the right frame of mind for training again.

Oh and as we landed in Heathrow today I went to get my van only to find it had been clamped! So I had to pay over £500 in parking fees to get out of short stay – they did initially want £1600! That'll teach me for being cocky!

BD 1/11

DAVID PHILIPPAERTS IS THE 2008 MX1 WORLD CHAMPION





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